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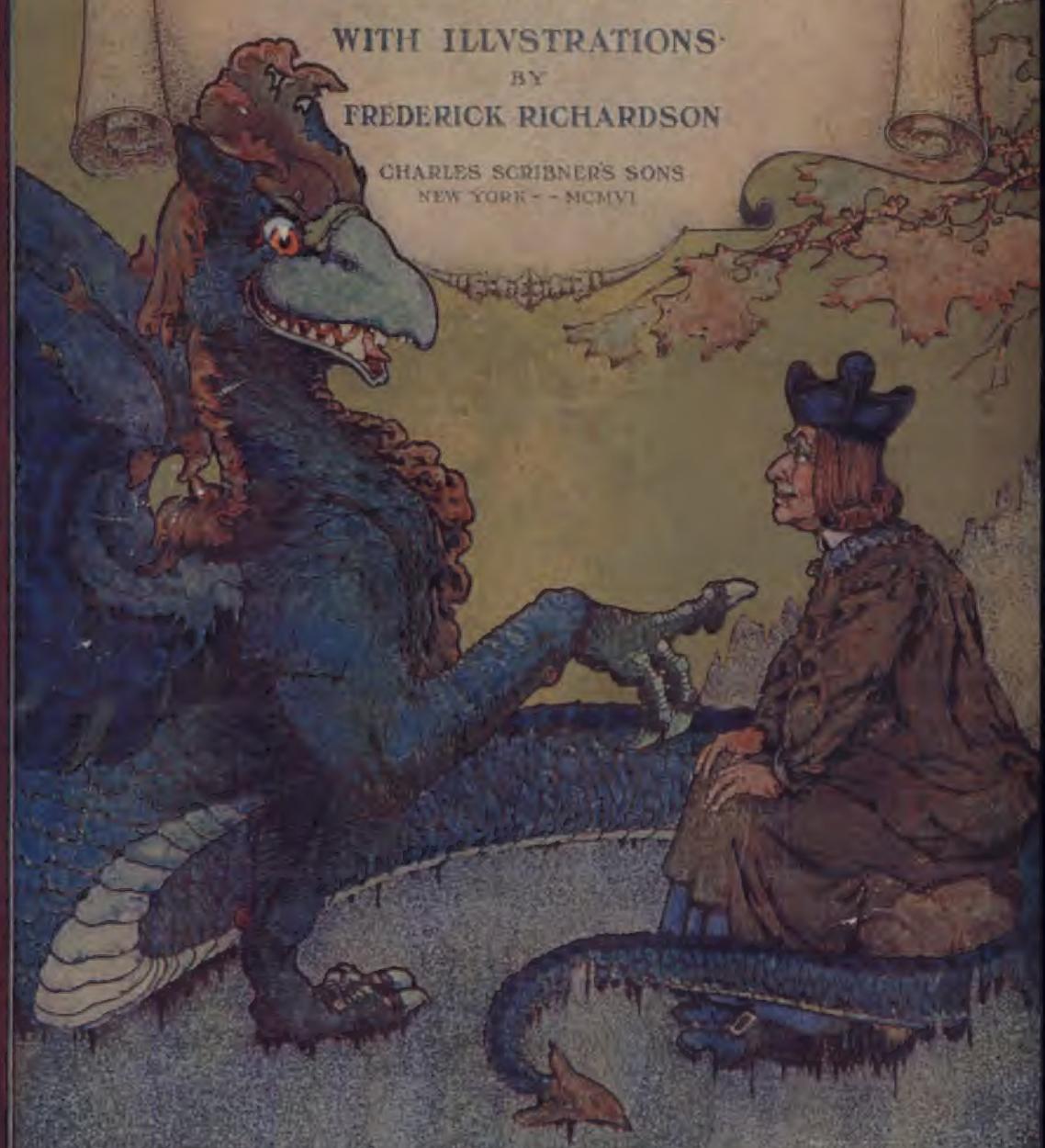
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AND OTHER FANCIFVL TALES
FRANK R. STOCKTON

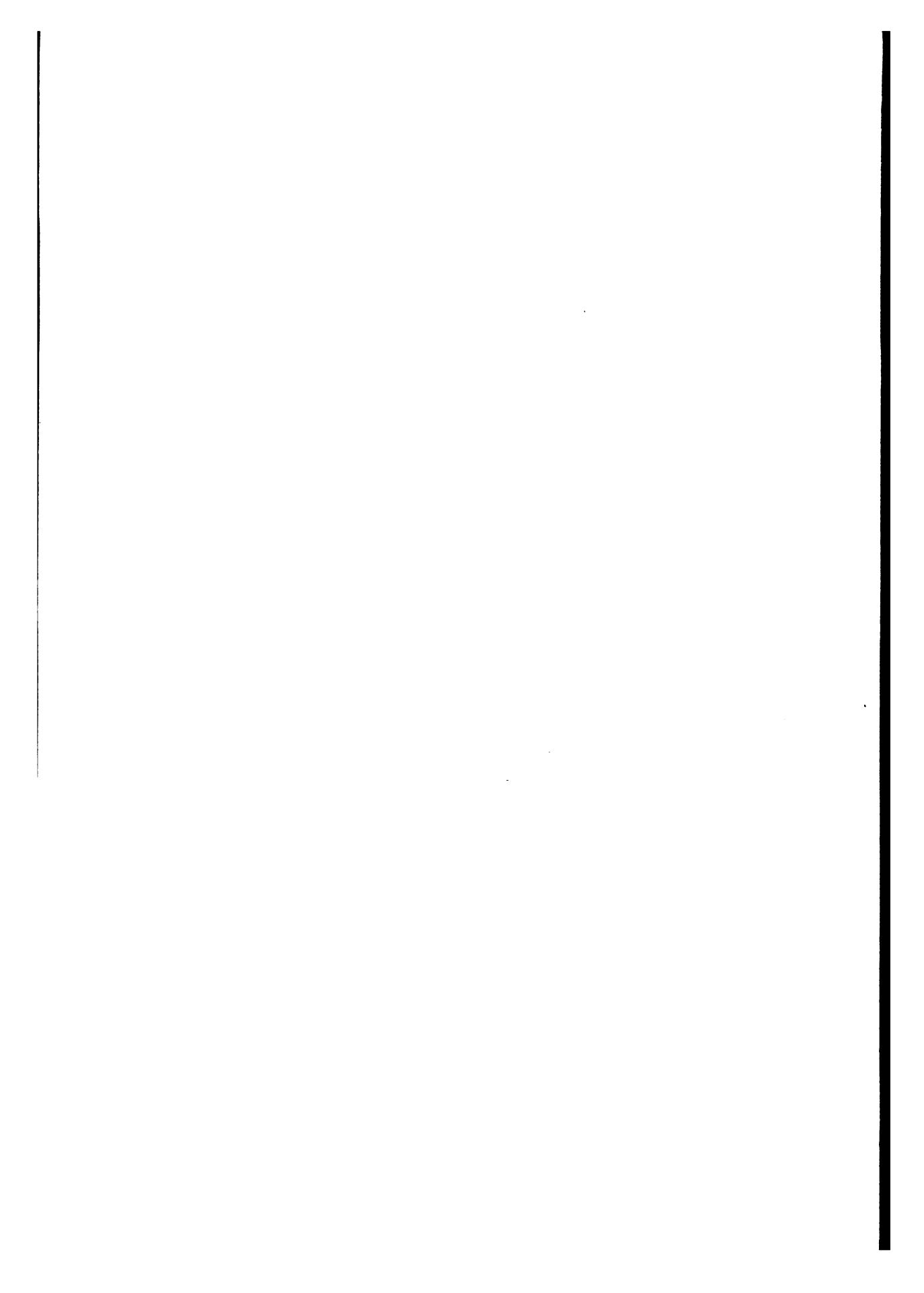
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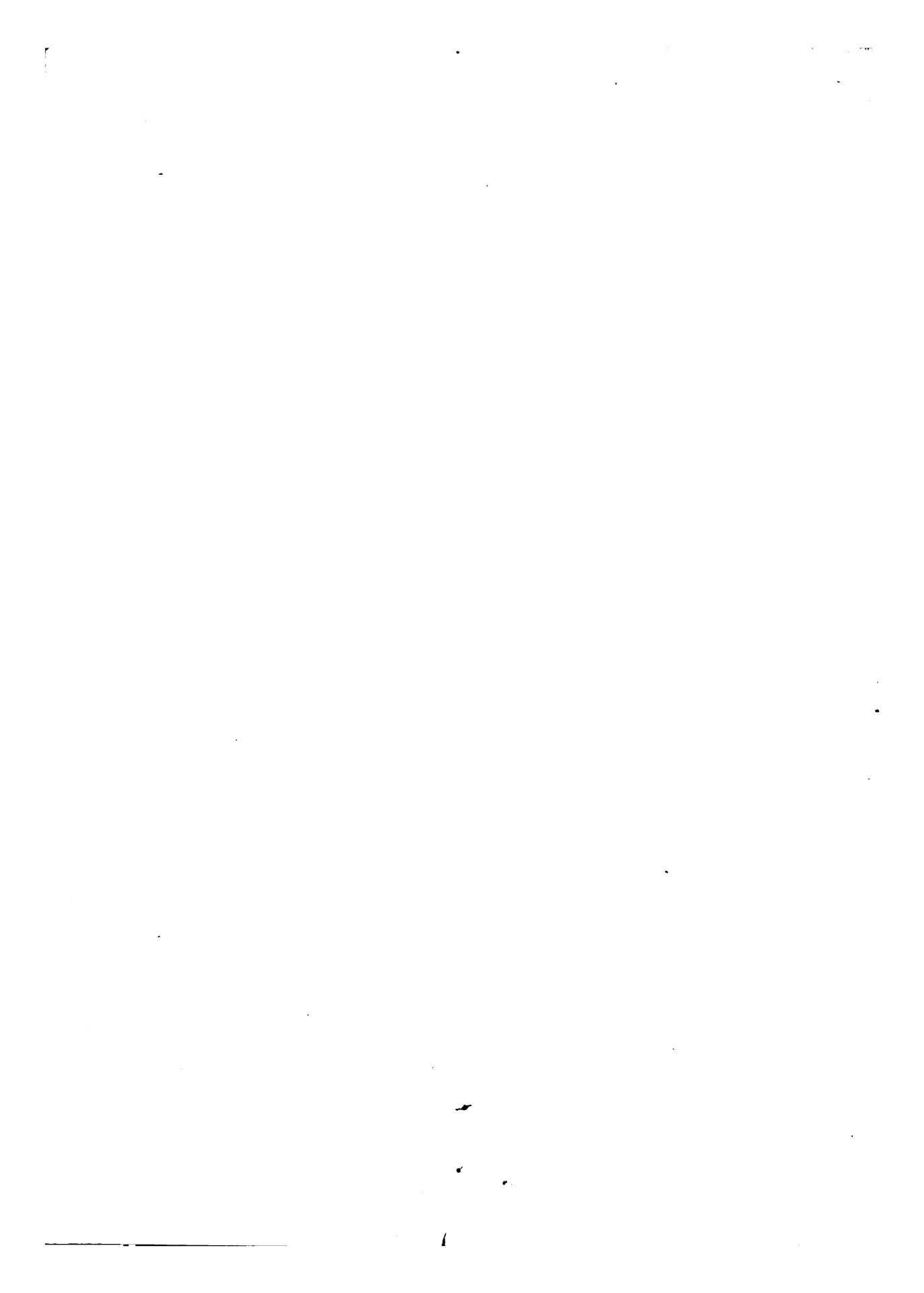
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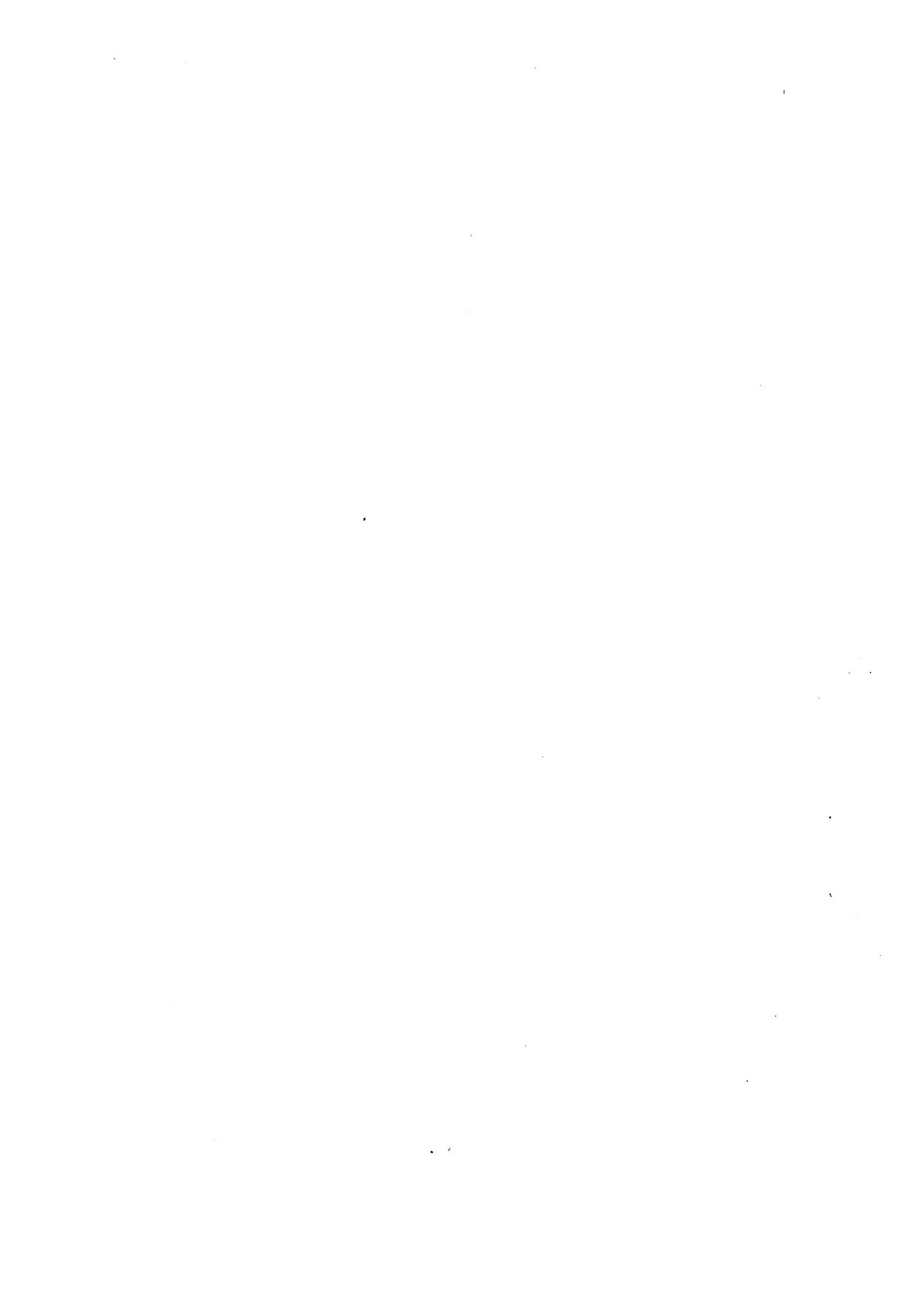
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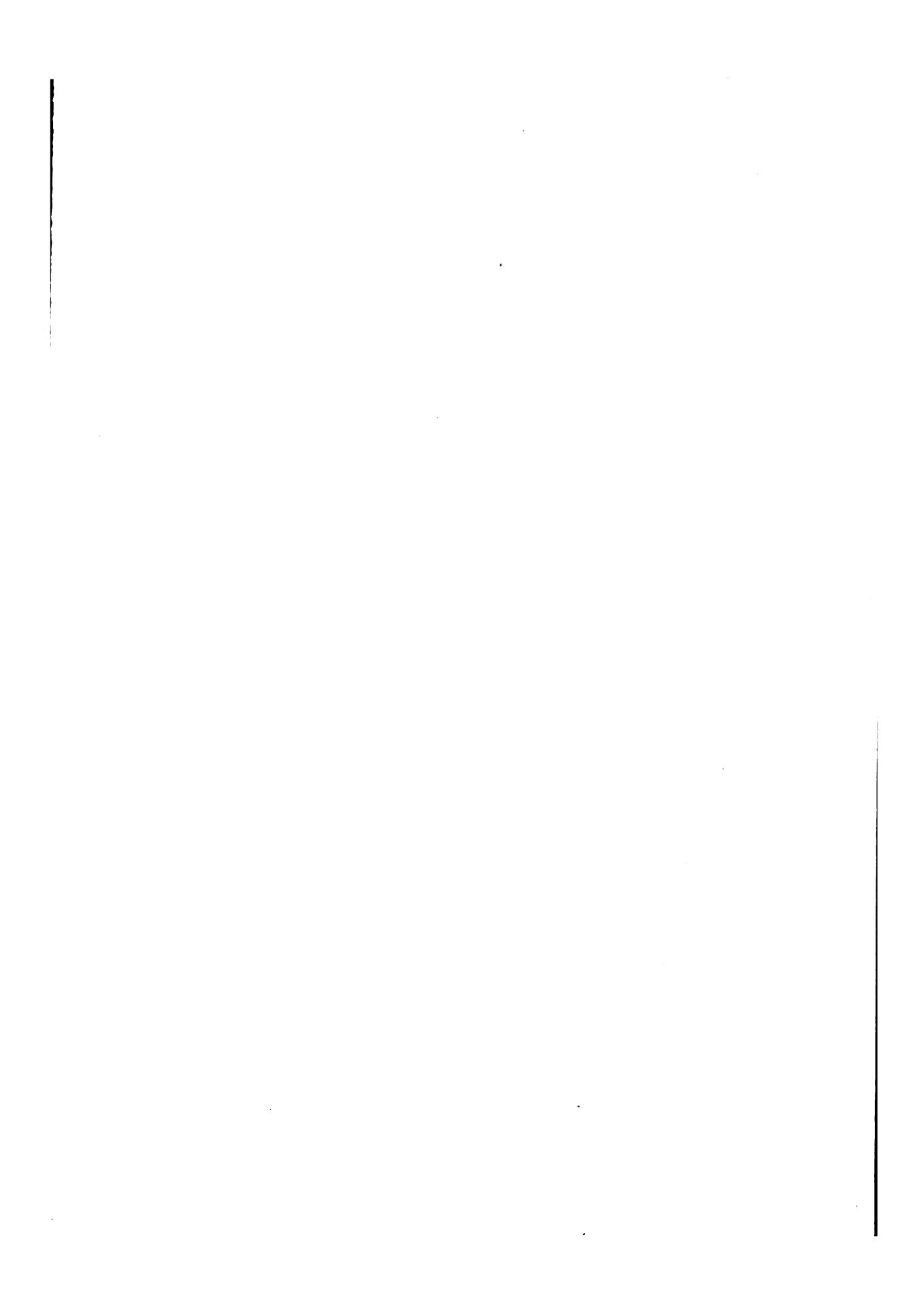


**THE QUEEN'S MUSEUM
AND OTHER FANCIFUL TALES**

This One



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AND OTHER FANCIFUL TALES

FRANK R. STOCKTON

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FREDERICK RICHARDSON

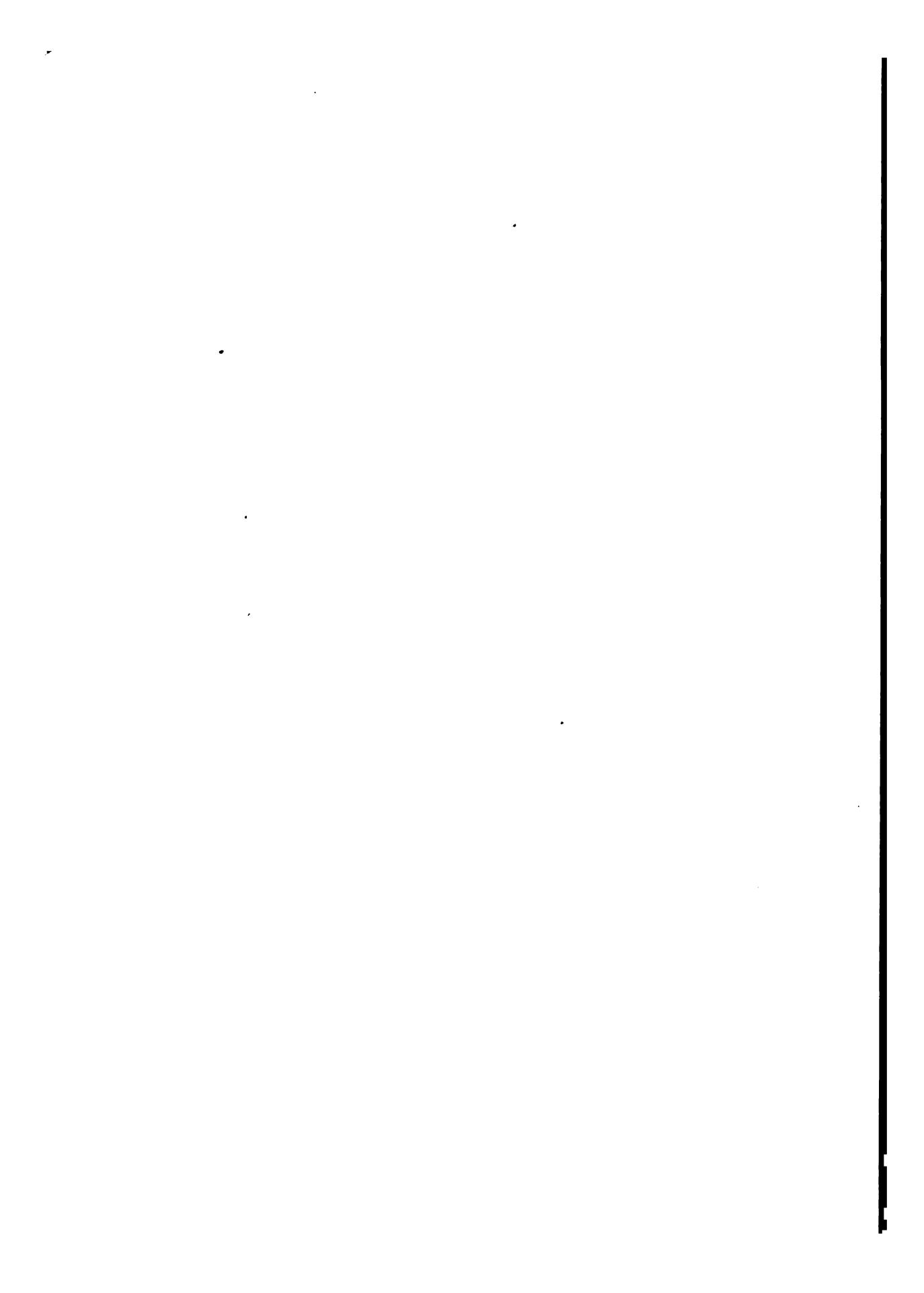
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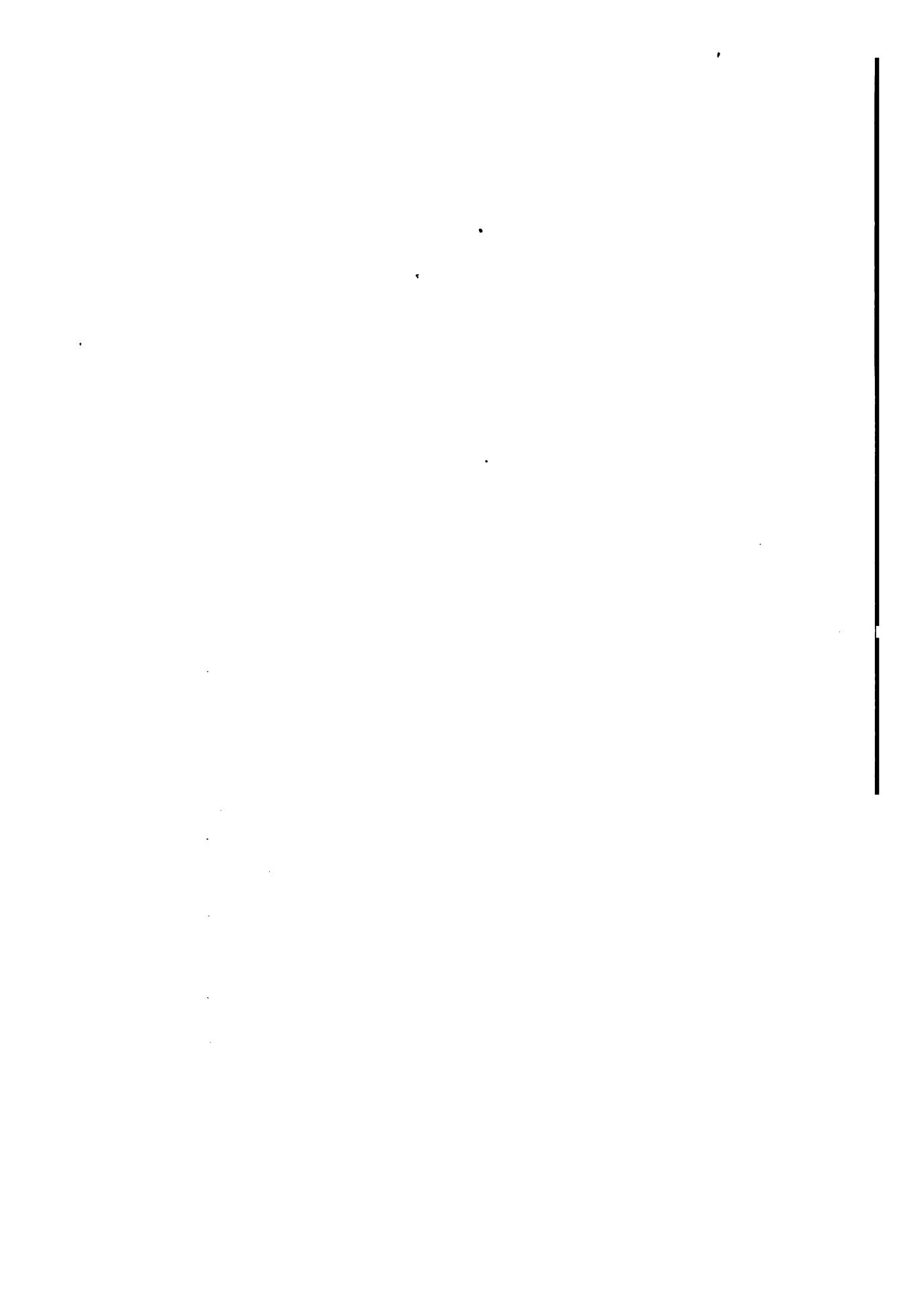
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**THE QUEEN'S MUSEUM
AND OTHER FANCIFUL TALES**





THE QUEEN'S MUSEUM

HERE was once a queen who founded, in her capital city, a grand museum. This institution was the pride of her heart, and she devoted nearly all her time to overseeing the collection of objects for it, and their arrangement in the spacious halls. This museum was intended to elevate the intelligence of her people, but the result was quite disappointing to the Queen. For some reason — and what it was she could not imagine — the people were not interested in her museum. She considered it the most delightful place in the world, and spent hours every day in examining and studying the thousands of objects it contained. But although here and there in the city there was a person who cared to visit the collection, the great body of the people found it impossible to feel the slightest interest in it. At first this grieved the Queen, and she tried to make her museum better. But as this did no good, she became very angry, and she

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issued a decree that all persons of mature age who were not interested in her museum should be sent to prison.

This decree produced a great sensation in the city. The people crowded to the building, and did their very best to be interested, but, in the majority of cases, the attempt was an utter failure ; they could not feel any interest whatever. The consequence was that hundreds and thousands of the people were sent to prison, and as there was not room enough for them in the ordinary jails, large temporary prisons were erected in various parts of the city. Those persons who were actually needed for work or service which no one else could do were allowed to come out in the daytime on parole, but at night they had to return to their prisons.

It was during this deplorable state of affairs that a stranger entered the city one day. He was surprised at seeing so many prisons, and approaching a window in one of them, behind the bars of which he saw a very respectable-looking citizen, he asked what all this meant. The citizen informed him how matters stood, and then, with tears mounting to his eyes, he added :

“ Oh, sir, I have tried my best to be interested in that museum, but it is impossible. I cannot make myself care for it in the slightest degree. What is more, I know I shall never be able to do so, and I shall languish here for the rest of my days.”

Passing on, the Stranger met a mother coming out of her house. Her face was pale, and she was weeping bitterly. Filled with pity he stopped and asked her what was the matter. “ Oh, sir,” she said, “ for a week I have been trying,

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for the sake of my dear children, to take an interest in that museum. For a time I thought I might do it, but the hope proved false. It is impossible. I must leave my little ones, and go to prison."

The Stranger was deeply affected by these cases and many others of a similar character which he soon met. "It is too bad! too bad!" he said to himself. "I never saw a city in so much trouble. There is scarcely a family, I am told, in which there is not some uninterested person. I must see the Queen and talk to her about it." And with this he wended his way to the palace.

He met the Queen just starting out on her morning visit to the museum. When he made it known that he was a stranger, and desired a short audience, she stopped and spoke to him.

"Have you visited my museum yet?" she said. "There is nothing in the city so well worth your attention as that. You should go there before seeing anything else. You have a high forehead and an intelligent expression, and I have no doubt that it will interest you greatly. I am going there myself, and I shall be glad to see what effect that fine collection has upon a stranger."

This did not suit the Stranger at all. From what he had heard he felt quite sure that if he went to the museum he would soon be in jail, and so he hurried to propose a plan which had occurred to him while on his way to the palace.

"I came to see your Majesty on the subject of the museum," he said, "and to crave permission to contribute to the collection some objects which shall be interesting to every one.

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I understand that it is highly desirable that every one should be interested."

"Of course it is," said the Queen, "and although I think that there is not the slightest reason why every one should not feel the keenest interest in what the museum already contains, I am willing to add to it whatever may make it of greater value."

"In that case," said the Stranger, "no time should be lost in securing what I wish to present."

"Go at once," said the Queen. "But how soon can you return?"

"It will take some days, at least," said the Stranger.

"Give me your parole to return in a week," said the Queen, "and start immediately."

The Stranger gave his parole and left the palace.

Having filled a leather bag with provisions from a cook's shop, he went out of the city gates. As he walked into the open country, he said to himself:

"I have certainly undertaken a very difficult enterprise. Where I am to find anything that will interest all the people in that city I am sure I do not know; but my heart is so filled with pity for the great number of unfortunate persons who are torn from their homes and shut up in prison, that I am determined to do something for them, if I possibly can. There must be some objects to be found in this vast country that will interest every one."

About noon he came to a great mountain-side covered with a forest. Thinking that he was as likely to find what he sought in one place as another, and preferring the shade to the sun,

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he entered the forest, and walked for some distance along a path which gradually led up the mountain. Having crossed a brook with its edges lined with water-cress, he soon perceived a large cave, at the entrance of which sat an aged hermit. "Ah," said the Stranger to himself, "this is indeed fortunate! This good and venerable man, who passes his life amid the secrets of nature, can surely tell me what I wish to know." Saluting the Hermit, he sat down and told the old man the object of his quest.

"I am afraid you are looking for what you will not find," said the Hermit. "Most people are too silly to be truly interested in anything. They herd together like cattle, and do not know what is good for them. There are now on this mountain-side many commodious and comfortable caves, all of which would be tenanted if people only knew how improving and interesting it is to live apart from their fellow-men. But, so far as it can be done, I will help you in your quest, which I think is a worthy one. I can do nothing for you myself, but I have a pupil who is very much given to wandering about and looking for curious things. He may tell you where you will be able to find something that will interest everybody, though I doubt it. You may go and see him, if you like, and I will excuse him from his studies for a time, so that he may aid you in your search."

The Hermit then wrote an excuse upon a piece of parchment, and giving it to the Stranger, he directed him to the cave of his pupil.

This was situated at some distance, and higher up the mountain, and when the Stranger reached it he found the

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of silks and rich cloths, with handsome caskets, and many other articles of value.

“What kind of a place is this?” exclaimed the Stranger, in great surprise.

“Don’t you know?” cried the Pupil, his eyes fairly sparkling with delight. “It is a robber’s den! Isn’t it a great thing to find a place like this?”

“A robber’s den!” exclaimed the Stranger, in alarm. “Let us get out of it as quickly as we can, or the robbers will return, and we shall be cut to pieces.”

“I don’t believe they are coming back very soon,” said the Pupil, “and we ought to stop and take a look at some of these things.”

“Fly, you foolish youth!” cried the Stranger. “You do not know what danger you are in.” So saying, he turned to hasten away from the place.

But he was too late. At that moment the robber Captain and his band entered the cave. When these men perceived the Stranger and the Hermit’s Pupil, they drew their swords and were about to rush upon them, when the Pupil sprang forward and, throwing up his long arms, exclaimed:

“Stop! it is a mistake!”

At these words, the robber Captain lowered his sword, and motioned to his men to halt. “A mistake!” he said. “What do you mean by that?”

“I mean,” said the Pupil, “that I was out looking for curiosities, and wandered into this place by accident. We haven’t taken a thing. You may count your goods, and you will find nothing missing. We have not even opened a box,

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Pupil fast asleep upon the ground. This individual was a long-legged youth, with long arms, long hair, a long nose, and a long face. When the Stranger awakened him, told him why he had come, and gave him the Hermit's excuse, the sleepy eyes of the Pupil brightened, and his face grew less long.

"That's delightful," he said, "to be let off on a Monday, for I generally have to be satisfied with a half-holiday Wednesdays and Saturdays."

"Is the Hermit very strict with you?" asked the Stranger.

"Yes," said the Pupil. "I have to stick closely to the cave, though I have been known to go fishing on days when there was no holiday. I have never seen the old man but once, and that was when he first took me. You know it would n't do for us to be too sociable. That would n't be hermit-like. He comes up here on the afternoons I am out, and writes down what I am to do for the next half-week."

"And do you always do it?" asked the Stranger.

"Oh, I get some of it done," said the Pupil. "But there have been times when I have wondered whether it would n't have been better for me to have been something else. But I have chosen my profession, and I suppose I must be faithful to it. We will start immediately on our search; but first I must put the cave in order, for the old man will be sure to come up while I am gone."

So saying, the Pupil opened an old parchment book at a marked page, and laid it on a flat stone which served as a table, and then placed a skull and a couple of bones in a proper position near by.

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The two now started off, the Pupil first putting a line and hook in his pocket, and pulling out a fishing-rod from under some bushes.

“What do you want with that?” asked the Stranger.
“We are not going to fish!”

“Why not?” said the Pupil. “If we come to a good place, we might catch something that would be a real curiosity.”

Before long they came to a mountain brook, and here the Pupil insisted on trying his luck. The Stranger was a little tired and hungry, and so was quite willing to sit down for a time and eat something from his bag. The Pupil ran off to find some bait, and he stayed away so long that the Stranger had quite finished his meal before he returned. He came back at last, however, in a state of great excitement.

“Come with me! come with me!” he cried. “I have found something that is truly astonishing! Come quickly!”

The Stranger arose and hurried after the Pupil, whose long legs carried him rapidly over the mountain-side. Reaching a large hole at the bottom of a precipitous rock, the Pupil stopped, and exclaiming, “Come in here and I will show you something that will amaze you!” he immediately entered the hole.

The Stranger, who was very anxious to see what curiosity he had found, followed him some distance along a narrow and winding underground passage. The two suddenly emerged into a high and spacious cavern, which was lighted by openings in the roof. On the floor, in various places, were strongly fastened boxes, and packages of many sorts, bales and bundles

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1. The *Academy of Natural and Writing Sciences* and

“Is n’t it a great thing to find a place like this ?”



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although I very much wanted to see what was in some of them."

"Are his statements correct?" said the Captain, turning to the Stranger.

"Entirely so," was the answer.

"You have truthful features and an honest expression," said the Captain, "and I do not believe you would be so dishonorable as to creep in here during our absence and steal our possessions. Your lives shall be spared, but you will be obliged to remain with us, for we cannot allow any one who knows our secret to leave us. You shall be treated well, and shall accompany us in our expeditions. And if your conduct merits it, you shall in time be made full members."

Bitterly the Stranger now regretted his unfortunate position. He strode up and down one side of the cave, vowing inwardly that never again would he allow himself to be led by a Hermit's Pupil. That individual, however, was in a state of high delight. He ran about from box to bale, looking at the rare treasures which some of the robbers showed him.

The two captives were fed and lodged very well, and the next day the Captain called them and the band together, and addressed them.

"We are now twenty-nine in number," he said, "twenty-seven full members, and two on probation. To-night we are about to undertake a very important expedition, in which we shall all join. We shall fasten up the door of the cave, and at the proper time I shall tell you to what place we are going."

An hour or two before midnight the band set out, accom-

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panied by the Stranger and the Hermit's Pupil, and when they had gone some miles the Captain halted them to inform them of the object of the expedition. "We are going," he said, "to rob the Queen's museum. It is the most important business we have ever undertaken."

At these words the Stranger stepped forward and made a protest. "I left the city yesterday," he said, "commissioned by the Queen to obtain one or more objects of interest for her museum; and to return now to rob an institution which I have promised to enrich will be simply impossible."

"You are right," said the Captain, after a moment's reflection; "such an action would be highly dishonorable on your part. If you will give me your word of honor that you will remain by this stone until our return, the expedition will proceed without you."

The Stranger gave his word, and having been left sitting upon the stone, soon dropped asleep, and so remained until he was awakened by the return of the band a little before daylight. They came slowly toiling along, each man carrying an enormous bundle upon his back. Near the end of the line was the Hermit's Pupil, bearing a load as heavy as any of the others. The Stranger offered to relieve him for a time of his burden, but the Pupil would not allow it.

"I don't wish these men to think I can't do as much as they can," he said. "You ought to have been along. We had a fine time! We swept that museum clean, I tell you! We didn't leave a thing on a shelf or in a case."

"What sort of things are they?" asked the Stranger.

"I don't know," replied the Pupil. "We didn't have any

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light for fear people would notice it, but the moon shone in bright enough for us to see all the shelves and the cases, and our orders were not to try and examine anything, but to take all that was there. The cases had great cloth covers on them, and we spread these on the floor and made bundles of the curiosities. We are going to examine them carefully as soon as we get to the den."

It was broad daylight when the robbers reached their cave. The bundles were laid in a great circle on the floor, and, at a given signal, they were opened. For a moment each robber gazed blankly at the contents of his bundle, and then they all began to fumble and search among the piles of articles upon the cloths ; but after a few minutes they arose, looking blander and more disappointed than before.

"So far as I can see," said the Captain, "there is nothing in the whole collection that I care for. I do not like a thing here !"

"Nor I !" "Nor I !" "Nor I !" cried each one of his band.

"I suppose," said the Captain, after musing for a moment, "that as these things are of no use to us, we are bound in honor to take them back."

"Hold !" said the Stranger, stepping forward. "Do not be in too great a hurry to do that." He then told the Captain of the state of affairs in the city, and explained in full the nature of the expedition he had undertaken for the Queen. "I think it would be better," he said, "if these things were not taken back for the present. If you have a safe place where you can put them, I will in due time tell the Queen where they are, and if she chooses she can send for them."

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“Good!” said the Captain. “It is but right that she should bear part of the labor of transportation. There is a disused cave a mile or so away, and we will tie up these bundles and carry them there, and then we shall leave the matter to you. We take no further interest in it. And if you have given your parole to the Queen to return in a week,” the Captain further continued, “of course you’ll have to keep it. Did you give your parole also?” he asked, turning to the Pupil.

“Oh, no!” cried that youth, “there was no time fixed for my return. And I am sure that I like a robber’s life much better than that of a hermit. There is ever so much more spice and dash in it.”

The Stranger was then told that if he would promise not to betray the robbers he might depart. He gave the promise, but added sadly that he had lost so much time that he was afraid he would not now be able to attain the object of his search and return within the week.

“If that is the case,” said the Captain, “we will gladly assist you. Comrades!” he cried, addressing his band, “after stowing this useless booty in the disused cave, and taking some rest and refreshment, we will set out again, and the object of our expedition shall be to obtain something for the Queen’s museum which will interest every one.”

Shortly after midnight the robbers set out, accompanied by the Stranger and the Pupil. When they had walked about an hour, the Captain, as was his custom, brought them to a halt, that he might tell them where they were going. “I have concluded,” said he, “that no place is so likely to contain

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what we are looking for as the castle of the great magician, Alfrarmedj. We will, therefore, proceed thither, and sack the castle."

"Will there not be great danger in attacking the castle of a magician?" asked the Stranger, in somewhat anxious tones.

"Of course there will be," said the Captain, "but we are not such cowards as to hesitate on account of danger. Forward, my men!" And on they all marched.

When they reached the magician's castle, the order was given to scale the outer wall. This the robbers did with great agility, and the Hermit's Pupil was among the first to surmount it. But the Stranger was not used to climbing, and he had to be assisted over the wall. Inside the great courtyard they perceived numbers of Weirds—strange, shadowy creatures who gathered silently around them. But, not in the least appalled, the robbers formed into a body and marched into the castle, the door of which stood open. They now entered a great hall having at one end a doorway before which hung a curtain. Following their Captain, the robbers approached this curtain, and pushing it aside, entered the room beyond. There, behind a large table, sat the great magician, Alfrarmedj, busy over his mystic studies, which he generally pursued in the dead hours of the night. Drawing their swords, the robbers rushed upon him.

"Surrender!" cried the Captain, "and deliver to us the treasures of your castle."

The old magician raised his head from his book, and pushing up his spectacles from his forehead, looked at them mildly, and said :

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“Freeze!”

Instantly they all froze as hard as ice, each man remaining in the position in which he was when the magical word was uttered. With uplifted swords and glaring eyes, they stood, rigid and stiff, before the magician. After calmly surveying the group, the old man said :

“I see among you one who has an intelligent brow and truthful expression. His head may thaw sufficiently for him to tell me what means this untimely intrusion upon my studies.”

The Stranger now felt his head begin to thaw, and in a few moments he was able to speak. He then told the magician about the Queen’s museum, and how it had happened that he had come there with the robbers.

“Your motive is a good one,” said the magician, “though your actions are somewhat erratic, and I do not mind helping you to find what you wish. In what class of objects do the people of the city take the most interest ?”

“Truly I do not know,” said the Stranger.

“This is indeed surprising!” exclaimed Alfrarmedj. “How can you expect to obtain that which will interest every one, when you do not know what it is in which every one takes an interest ? Go find out this, and then return to me, and I will see what can be done.”

The magician then summoned his Weirds, and ordered them to carry the frozen visitors outside the castle walls. Each one of the rigid figures was taken up by two Weirds, who carried him out and stood him up in the road outside the castle. When all had been properly set up, with the

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Captain at their head, the gates were shut, and the magician, still sitting at his table, uttered the word "Thaw!"

Instantly the whole band thawed and marched away. At daybreak they halted, and considered how they should find out what all the people in the city took an interest in.

"One thing is certain," cried the Hermit's Pupil: "whatever it is, it is n't the same thing."

"Your remark is not well put together," said the Stranger, "but I see the force of it. It is true that different people like different things. But how shall we find out what the different people like?"

"By asking them," said the Pupil.

"Good!" cried the Captain, who preferred action to words. "This night we will ask them."

He then drew upon the sand a plan of the city,—with which he was quite familiar, having carefully robbed it for many years,—and divided it into twenty-eight sections, each one of which was assigned to a man. "I omit you," the Captain said to the Stranger, "because I find that you are not expert at climbing." He then announced that at night the band would visit the city, and that each man should enter the houses in his district, and ask the people what it was in which they took the greatest interest.

They then proceeded to the cave for rest and refreshment, and a little before midnight they entered the city, and each member of the band, including the Hermit's Pupil, proceeded to attend to the business assigned to him. It was ordered that no one should disturb the Queen, for they knew that what she took most interest in was the museum. During the

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night nearly every person in the town was aroused by a black-bearded robber, who had climbed into one of the windows of the house, and who, instead of demanding money and jewels, simply asked what it was in which that person took the greatest interest. Upon receiving an answer, the robber repeated it until he had learned it by heart, and then went to the next house. As so many of the citizens were confined in prisons, which the robbers easily entered, they transacted the business in much less time than they would otherwise have required.

The Hermit's Pupil was very active, climbing into and out of houses with great agility. He obtained his answers quite as easily as did the others, but whenever he left a house there was a shade of disappointment upon his features. Among the last places that he visited was a room in which two boys were sleeping. He awoke them and asked the usual question. While they were trembling in their bed, not knowing what to answer, the Pupil drew his sword and exclaimed: "Come, now, no prevarication. You know it's fishing-tackle. Speak out!" Each of the boys then promptly declared it was fishing-tackle, and the Pupil left, greatly gratified. "I was very much afraid," he said to himself, "that not a person in my district would say fishing-tackle, and I am glad to think that there were two boys who had sense enough to like something that is really interesting."

It was nearly daylight when the work was finished, and then the band gathered together in an appointed place on the outside of the city, where the Stranger awaited them. Each of the men had an excellent memory, which was necessary in their profession, and they repeated to the Stranger all the

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objects and subjects that had been mentioned to them, and he wrote them down upon tablets.

The next night, accompanied by the band, he proceeded to the castle of the magician, the great gate of which was silently opened for them by the Weirds. When they were ushered into the magician's room, Alfrarmedj took the tablets from the Stranger and examined them carefully.

"All these things should make a very complete collection," he said, "and I think I have specimens of the various objects in my interminable vaults." He then called his Weirds, and giving one of them the tablets, told him to go with his companions into the vaults and gather enough of the things therein mentioned to fill a large museum. In half an hour the Weirds returned and announced that the articles were ready in the great courtyard.

"Go, then," said the magician, "and assist these men to carry them to the Queen's museum."

The Stranger then heartily thanked Alframedj for the assistance he had given, and the band, accompanied by a number of Weirds, proceeded to carry the objects of interest to the Queen's museum. It was a strange procession. Half a dozen Weirds carried a stuffed mammoth, followed by others bearing the skeleton of a whale, while the robbers and the rest of their queer helpers were loaded with everything relating to history, science, and art which ought to be in a really good museum. When the whole collection had been put in place upon the floors, the shelves, and in the cases, it was nearly morning. The robbers, with the Hermit's Pupil, retired to the cave, the Weirds disappeared,

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while the Stranger betook himself to the Queen's palace, where, as soon as the proper hour arrived, he requested an audience.

When he saw the Queen, he perceived that she was very pale and that her cheeks bore traces of recent tears. "You are back in good time," she said to him, "but it makes very little difference whether you have succeeded in your mission or not. There is no longer any museum. There has been a great robbery, and the thieves have carried off the whole of the vast and valuable collection which I have been so long in making."

"I know of that affair," said the Stranger, "and I have already placed in your museum building the collection I have obtained. If your Majesty pleases, I shall be glad to have you look at it. It may, in some degree, compensate for that which has been stolen."

"Compensate!" cried the Queen. "Nothing can compensate for it. I do not even wish to see what you have brought."

"Be that as your Majesty pleases," said the Stranger; "but I will be so bold as to say that I have great hopes that the collection I have obtained will interest the people. Will your Majesty graciously allow them to see it?"

"I have no objection to that," said the Queen. "Indeed, I shall be very glad if they can be made to be interested in the museum, I will give orders that the prisons be opened, so that everybody can go to see what you have brought. And those who shall be interested in it may return to their homes. I did not release my obstinate subjects when the

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museum was robbed, because their fault then was just as great as it was before, and it would not be right that they should profit by my loss."

The Queen's proclamation was made, and for several days the museum was crowded with people moving from morning till night through the vast collection of stuffed animals, birds, and fishes, rare and brilliant insects, mineral and vegetable curiosities, beautiful works of art, and all the strange, valuable, and instructive objects which had been brought from the interminable vaults of the magician Alfrarmedj. The Queen's officers, who had been sent to observe whether or not the people were interested, were in no doubt upon this point. Every eye sparkled with delight, for every one found something which was the very thing he wished to see. And in the throng was the Hermit's Pupil, standing in rapt ecstasy before a large case containing all sorts of fishing-tackle, from the smallest hooks for little minnows to the great irons and spears used in capturing whales.

No one went back to prison, and the city was full of reunited households and happy homes. On the morning of the fourth day, a grand procession of citizens came to the palace to express to the Queen their delight and appreciation of her museum. The great happiness of her subjects could but please the Queen. She called the Stranger to her, and said to him :

"Tell me how you came to know what it was that would interest my people."

"I asked them," said the Stranger; "that is to say, I arranged that they should be asked."

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“That was well done,” said the Queen. “But it is a great pity that my long labors in their behalf should have been lost. For many years I have been a collector of buttonholes, and there was nothing valuable or rare in the line of my studies of which I had not an original specimen or a facsimile. My agents brought me from foreign lands, even from the most distant islands of the sea, buttonholes of every kind, in silk, in wool, in cloth of gold, in every imaginable material, and of those which could not be obtained careful copies were made. There was not a duplicate specimen in the whole collection, only one of each kind, nothing repeated. Never before was there such a museum. With all my power I strove to educate my people up to an appreciation of buttonholes, but, with the exception of a few tailors and seamstresses, nobody took the slightest interest in what I had provided for their benefit. I am glad that my people are happy, but I cannot restrain a sigh for the failure of my efforts.”

“The longer your Majesty lives,” said the Stranger, “the better you will understand that we cannot make other people like a thing simply because we like it ourselves.”

“Stranger,” said the Queen, gazing upon him with admiration, “are you a king in disguise?”

“I am,” he replied.

“I thought I perceived it,” said the Queen, “and I wish to add that I believe you are far better able to govern this kingdom than I am. If you choose I will resign it to you.”

“Not so, your Majesty,” said the other. “I would not deprive you of your royal position, but I should be happy to share it with you.”

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"That will answer very well," said the Queen. And turning to an attendant, she gave orders that preparations should be made for their marriage on the following day.

After the royal wedding, which was celebrated with great pomp and grandeur, the Queen paid a visit to the museum, and, much to her surprise, was greatly delighted and interested. The King then informed her that he happened to know where the robbers had stored her collection, which they could not sell or make use of, and, if she wished, he would regain the collection and erect a building for its reception.

"We will not do that at present," said the Queen. "When I shall have thoroughly examined and studied all these objects, most of which are entirely new to me, we will decide about the buttonholes."

The Hermit's Pupil did not return to his cave. He was greatly delighted with the spice and dash of a robber's life, so different from that of a hermit, and he determined, if possible, to change his business and enter the band. He had a conversation with the Captain on the subject, and that individual encouraged him in his purpose.

"I am tired," the Captain said, "of a robber's life. I have stolen so much that I cannot use what I have. I take no further interest in accumulating spoils. The quiet of a hermit's life attracts me, and, if you like, we shall change places. I will become the pupil of your old master, and you shall be the captain of my band."

The change was made. The Captain retired to the cave of the Hermit's Pupil, while the latter, with the hearty

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consent of all the men, took command of the band of robbers.

When the King heard of this change, he was not at all pleased, and he sent for the ex-Pupil.

“I am willing to reward you,” he said, “for assisting me in my recent undertaking, but I cannot allow you to lead a band of robbers in my dominions.”

A dark shade of disappointment passed over the ex-Pupil’s features, and his face lengthened visibly.

“It is too bad,” he said, “to be thus cut short at the very outset of a brilliant career. I’ll tell you what I’ll do,” he added suddenly, his face brightening; “if you’ll let me keep on in my new profession, I’ll promise to do nothing but rob robbers.”

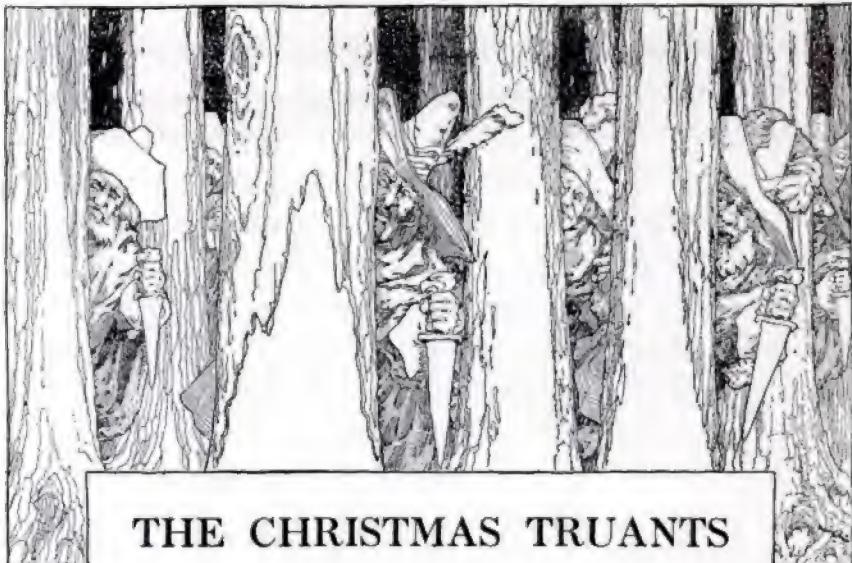
“Very well,” said the King, “if you will confine yourself to that, you may retain your position.”

The members of the band were perfectly willing to rob in the new way, for it seemed quite novel and exciting to them. The first place they robbed was their own cave, and as they all had excellent memories, they knew from whom the various goods had been stolen, and everything was returned to its proper owner. The ex-Pupil then led his band against the other dens of robbers in the kingdom, and his movements were conducted with such dash and vigor that the various hordes scattered in every direction, while the treasures in their dens were returned to the owners, or, if these could not be found, were given to the poor. In a short time every robber, except those led by the ex-Pupil, had gone into some other business, and the victorious youth led his

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band into other kingdoms to continue the great work of robbing robbers.

The Queen never sent for the collection of curiosities which the robbers had stolen from her. She was so much interested in the new museum that she continually postponed the reëstablishment of her old one, and, as far as can be known, the buttonholes are still in the cave where the robbers shut them up.



THE CHRISTMAS TRUANTS

CHRISTMAS was coming a long time ago, and the boys in a certain far-away school were talking and thinking about it. Eleven of these youngsters, who were all great friends, and generally kept together, whether at work or play, held a secret meeting, at which they resolved that they were tired of the ordinary ways of spending Christmas.

“We are bored to death,” said one of the older boys, “with Christmas trees, with Christmas games, with Christmas carols, and with the hanging-up of stockings on Christmas Eve. Such things may do very well for children, but we have grown out of them.”

“That’s true!” cried the others. “We’ve grown out of that kind of nonsense.”

“Yes, sir!” exclaimed the smallest boy of all, who was generally known as Tomtit. “We’ve grown out of that.”

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“Of course,” said the biggest boy, who was called by his companions Old Pluck, because he had never been found to be afraid of anything, “there will be this Christmas childishness at the school, just as there has been always; and I propose that instead of staying here and submitting to it, we run away, and have a Christmas to suit ourselves.”

“Hurrah!” cried the other boys. “That’s what we shall do. Have a Christmas to suit ourselves.”

In consequence of this resolution, on the afternoon of the next day but one to Christmas these eleven boys ran away from school, with the intention of finding some place where they would be free to celebrate the great holiday in whatever way they pleased. They walked as fast as they could, little Tomtit keeping up bravely in the rear, although he was obliged to run almost as much as he walked, until they were at a long distance from the school. Night was now coming on, and Old Pluck called a halt.

“Boys,” said he, “we will camp at the edge of that forest, and those of you who have brought bows and arrows had better look about and see if you can’t shoot some birds and rabbits for our supper. The unarmed members must gather wood to make a camp-fire. But if you are tired, Tomtit, you need n’t do anything.”

“Tired!” exclaimed the little fellow, standing up very straight and throwing out his chest, “I should like to know why I should be tired. I’ll go and bring some logs.”

Tomtit was very anxious to be considered just as strong and active as the other boys. Every morning he used to get one of his companions to feel the muscles of his arms,

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to see if they had not increased in size since the day before.

The camp-fire was burning brightly when the boys with the bows and arrows returned, stating that they had found it rather too late in the day for game, and that it would be better to postpone the shooting of birds and rabbits till the next morning. Old Pluck then asked the members of his little company what provisions they had brought with them, and it was found that no one except Tomtit had thought of bringing anything. He had in his coat pocket a luncheon of bread and meat. It was thereupon ordered that Tomtit's luncheon should be divided into eleven portions, and the little fellow was given a knife with which to cut it up.

It was at this time that there came through the forest a band of robbers—five men and a chief. These men, on their way to their castle, had been talking about the approach of Christmas.

“I am getting very tired,” said the chief, “of the wild revelries with which on great occasions we make our castle ring: It would be a most agreeable relief, methinks, if we could celebrate the coming Christmas as ordinary people do. The trouble is, we don’t know how.”

“You speak well,” replied one of his followers. “We would be glad enough to have the ordinary Christmas festivities if we did but know how such things are managed.”

The conversation was cut short at this point by the discovery of a camp-fire at the edge of the wood. Instantly every robber crouched close to the ground, and crept silently

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to the spot where the boys were gathered around Tomtit, watching him as he cut up his luncheon.

In a few moments the chieftain gave a whistle, and then the robbers rushed out, and each of the men seized two of the larger boys, while the chief stooped down and grasped Tomtit by the collar. Some of the boys kicked and scuffled a great deal; but this was of no use, and they were all marched away to the robbers' castle, little Tomtit feeling very proud that it took a whole man to hold him by the collar.

When they reached the castle the boys were shut up in a large room, where they were soon provided with a plentiful supper. Having finished their meal, they were conducted to the great hall of the castle, where the robber chief sat in his chair of state, a huge fire blazing upon the hearth, while suits of armor, glittering weapons, and trophies of many kinds were hung upon the walls.

The boys were now ordered to tell their story, and when Old Pluck had finished it the chief addressed his captives thus: "I am sure that you young fellows could never have imagined the pleasure you were going to give to me when you determined to run away from school at this happy season. My men and myself have a fancy for a Christmas like that of other people. We want a Christmas tree, Christmas carols and games, and all that sort of festivity. We know nothing about these things ourselves, and were wondering how we could manage to have the kind of Christmas we want. But now that we have you boys with us, it will all be simple and easy enough. You shall celebrate Christmas for us in the

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manner to which you have always been accustomed. We will provide you with everything that is necessary, and we will have a good old school-and-home Christmas. You shall even hang up your stockings, and I will see to it that Santa Claus for the first time visits this castle. And now, my fine fellows, to bed with you, and to-morrow we will all go to work to prepare for a good old-fashioned Christmas."

The boys were conducted to a large upper room, where they found eleven mattresses spread out upon the floor. They threw themselves upon their beds, but not one of them could close his eyes through thinking of the doleful plight which they were in. They had run away to get rid of the tiresome old Christmas doings, and now they were to go through all those very things just to please a band of robbers. The thought of it was insupportable, and for an hour or two each boy rolled and moaned upon his mattress.

At last Old Pluck spoke. "Boys," he said, "all is now quiet below, and I believe those rascally robbers have gone to bed. Let us wait a little while longer, and then slip downstairs and run away. We can surely find some door or window which we can open, and I for one, am not willing to stay here and act the part of a Christmas slave for the pleasure of these bandits."

"No," exclaimed Tomtit, sitting up in bed, so as to expand his chest, "we will never consent to that."

The boys eagerly agreed to Old Pluck's plan, and in about half an hour they quietly arose and stole toward the stairs. The full moon was shining in through the windows, so that they could see perfectly well where they were going. They

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had gone a short distance down the great staircase, when Old Pluck, who led the way, heard a slight noise behind him. Turning to inquire what this was, he was told it was the cracking of Tomtit's knees.

"Pass the word to Tomtit," he said, in a whisper, "that if he can't keep his knees from cracking he must stay where he is."

Poor little Tomtit, who brought up the rear, was dreadfully troubled when he heard this, but he bravely passed the word back that his knees should not crack any more, and the line moved on.

It was difficult now for Tomtit to take a step, for if he bent his knees they were sure to crack. He tried going downstairs stiff-legged, like a pair of scissors, but this he found almost impossible, so he made up his mind that the only thing he could do was to slide down the broad banister. He was used to this feat, and he performed it with much dexterity. The banister, however, was very smooth and steep and he went down much faster than he intended, shooting off at the bottom and landing on the floor on the broad of his back.

The boys were now in the great hall, and seeing a light in the adjoining room they looked into it. There, upon couches made of the skins of wild beasts, they saw the six robbers, fast asleep. A happy thought now came into the mind of Old Pluck. Stepping back, he looked around him, and soon perceived in one corner of the hall a quantity of rich stuffs and other booty, bound up into bundles with heavy cords. Taking out his knife he quickly cut off a number of these cords and gave them to his companions.

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“Boys,” he then whispered, “I have thought of a splendid plan. Let us bind these robbers hand and foot, and then, instead of doing what they want us to do, we can make them do what we want. That will be ever so much better fun than running away.”

“Good!” said the boys. “But suppose they wake up while we are tying them?”

“If we are truly brave,” said Old Pluck, “we must just go ahead, and not think of anything like that.”

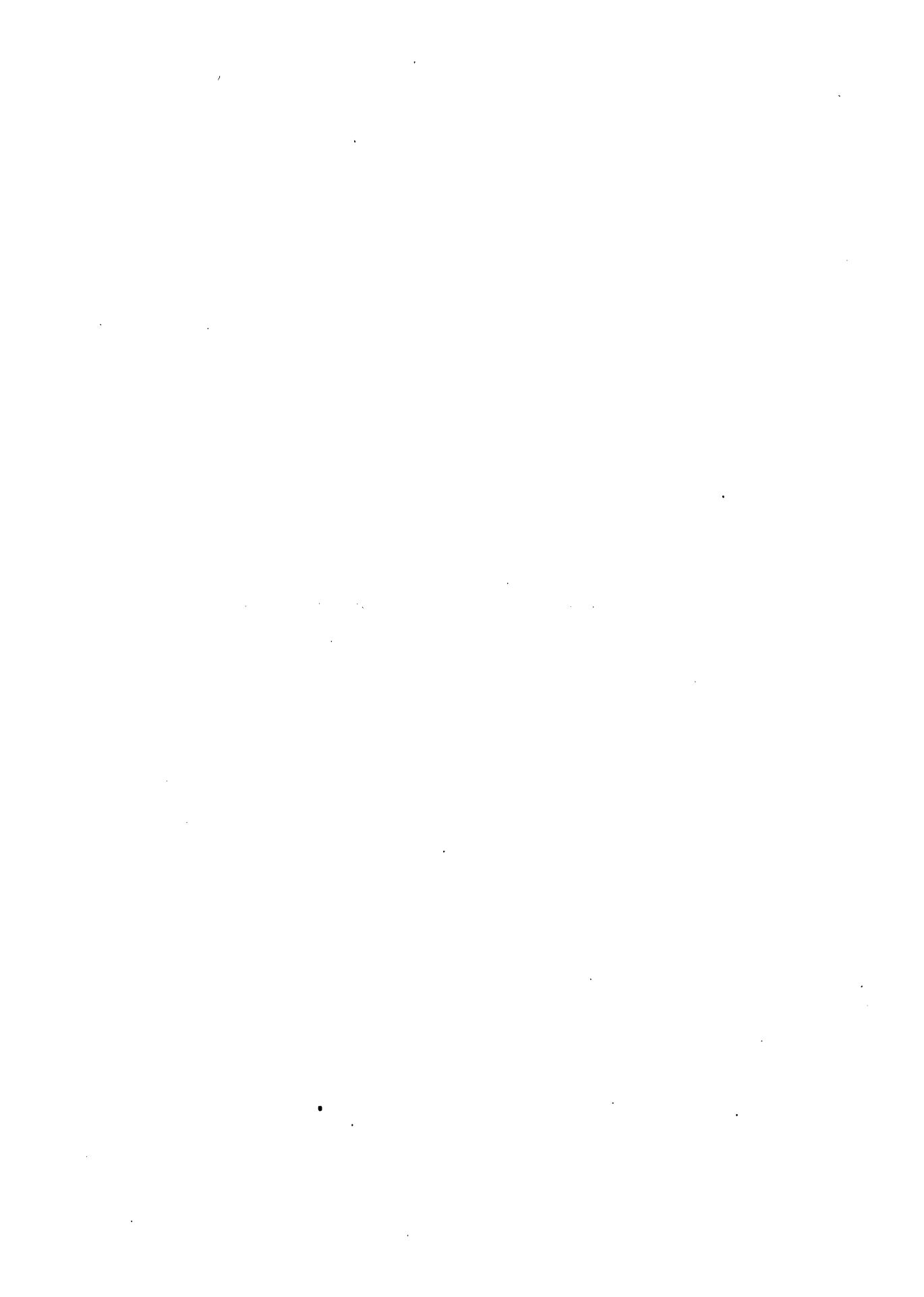
“Yes, sir,” said Tomtit, straightening himself and throwing out his chest, “we must n’t think of anything of that sort.”

The little fellow was terribly frightened at the idea of going into that room and tying those big savage men, but if the other fellows did it, he was bound to do it too.

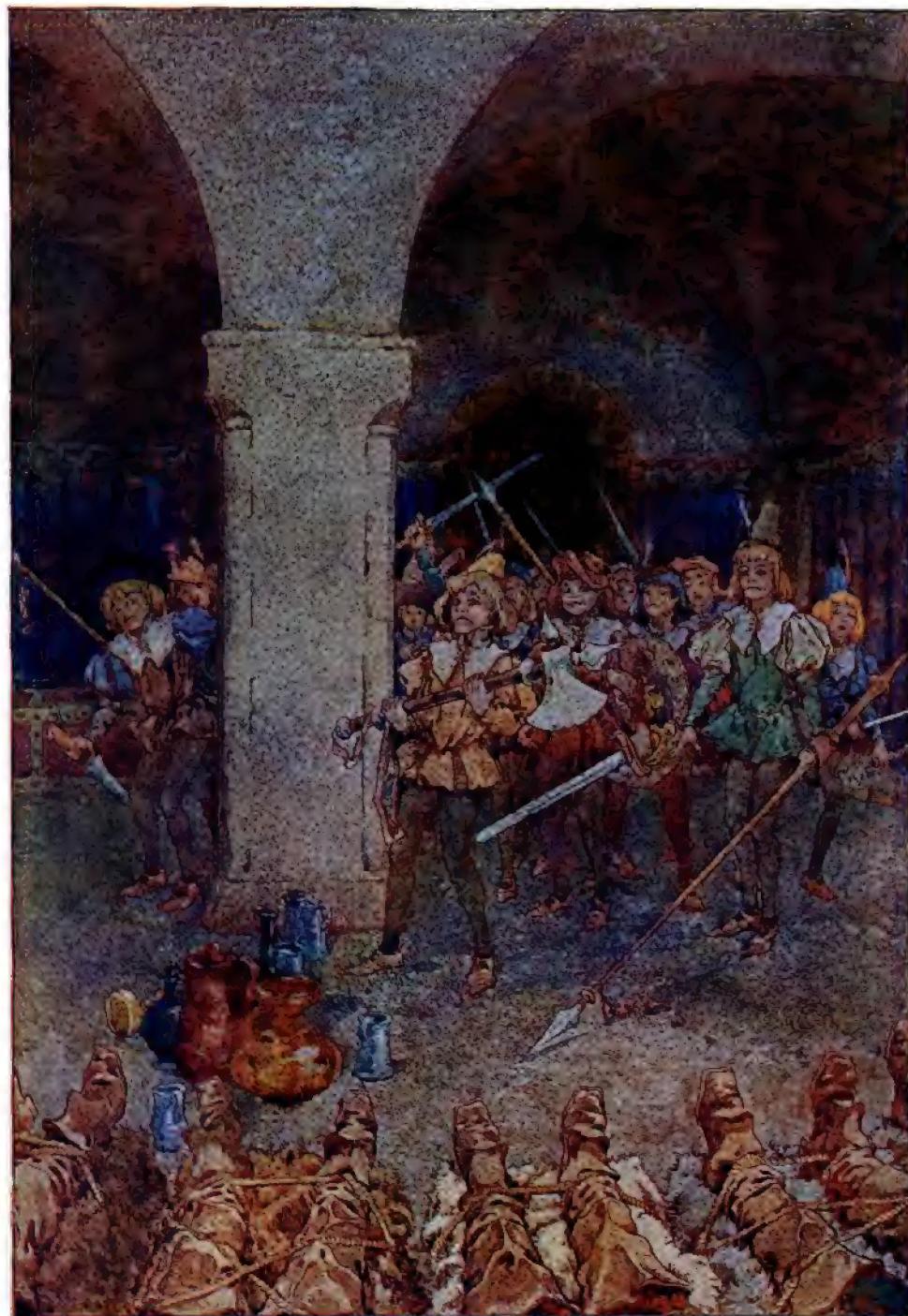
The boys now softly slipped into the room, and as the robbers slept very soundly, it was not long before they were all securely bound hand and foot, Old Pluck going around himself to see that every cord was well drawn and knotted. Then, motioning to the boys to follow him, he went into the great hall, and there he ordered his companions to arm themselves.

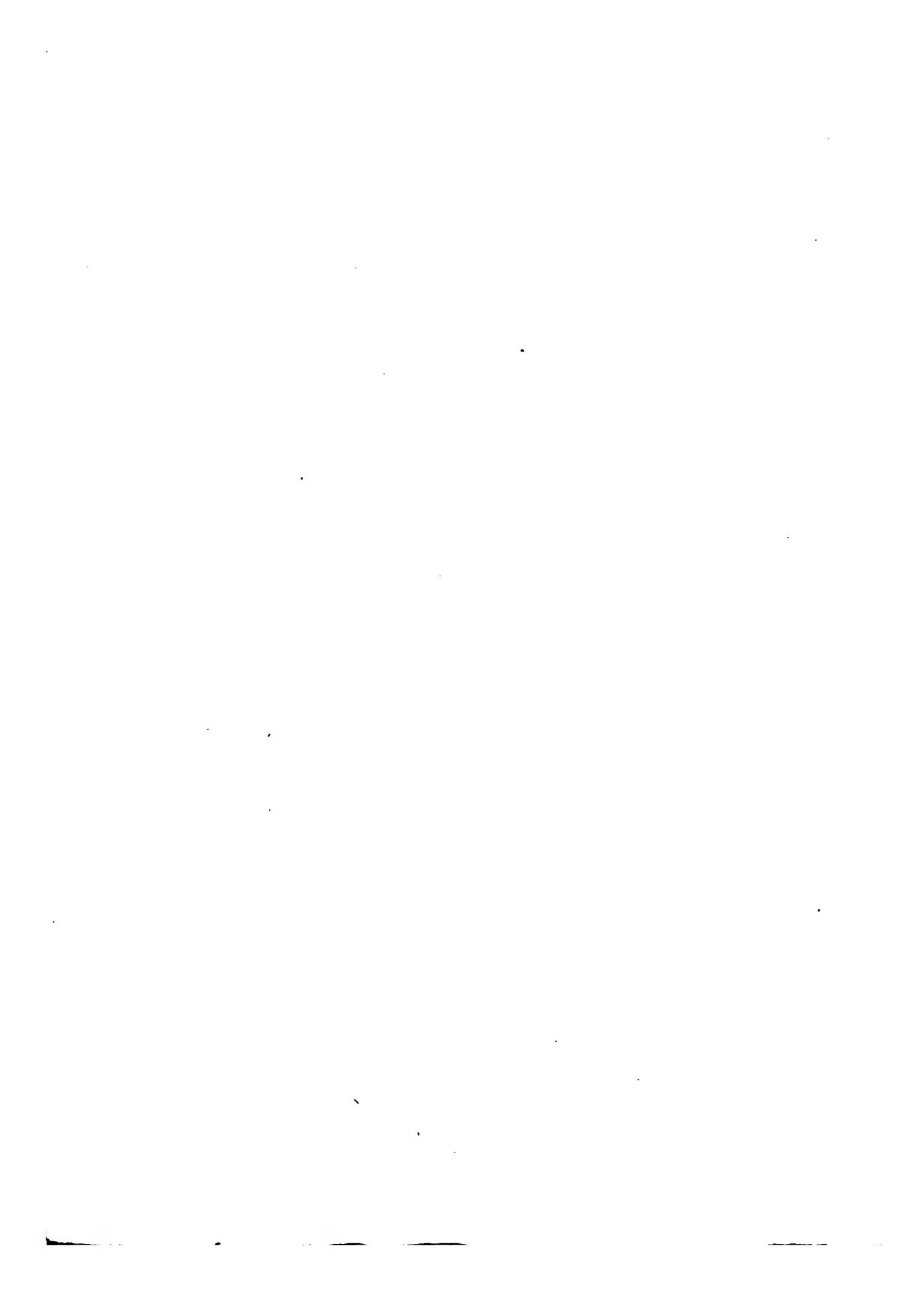
This command was obeyed with delight by the boys. Some took swords, some spears, while others bound around their waists great belts containing daggers and knives. Old Pluck laid hold of a huge battle-axe, while Tomtit clapped on his head the chief’s hat, ornamented with eagle plumes, and took into his hand a thin, sharp rapier, the blade of which was quite as long as himself.

When all were ready, the boys reentered the other room,



When all were ready the boys reentered the other room.





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and, with their weapons in their hands, stood over the sleeping robbers. Raising his heavy battle-axe high above the head of the chief, Old Pluck called out to him to awake. Instantly every man opened his eyes, and struggled to rise. But when they found their hands and feet were tied, and saw the boys with their swords and spears standing over them, and heard Old Pluck's loud voice ordering them not to move, every robber lay flat on his back, and remained perfectly still.

“Now, then,” said Old Pluck to the chief, “if you do not promise that you and your men will obey me for the next two days, I will split your head with this axe.”

“I am willing to parley with you,” said the chief, “and will listen to all you have to say; but for mercy's sake put down that battle-axe. It is too heavy for you, and you will let it drop on me without intending it.”

“No,” said Old Pluck, steadyng the great axe as well as he could, “I will hold it over you until we have made our bargain.”

“Speak quickly, then,” said the chief, his face turning pale as he looked up at the trembling axe.

“All you have to do,” said Old Pluck, “is to promise that you and your men will do everything that we tell you to do to-morrow and next day. You will not find our tasks at all difficult, and it will only be for two days, you know.”

“Any sort of task, if it lasted a year,” said the chief, “would be better than having you staggering over me with that battle-axe. I promise without reserve for myself and men.”

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“Very good,” said Old Pluck, letting down his axe as carefully as he could. “And now we will set you free.”

The men were untied, and the boys went to bed, and the next morning all breakfasted together in the great hall. When the meal was over the chief pushed back his chair, and addressed the boys.

“Now, then, my young friends,” said he, “what is it that you wish me and my men to do?”

Then stood up Old Pluck and said, “We boys, as I told you before, ran away from school because we are tired of the old humdrum Christmas, and nothing better could have happened to us than to get you fine fellows into our power, as we have done. It will be the jolliest thing in the world for us to see you and your band go through all the wild feats and bold exploits which belong to robber life; and we would like you to begin now, and keep it up all day and to-morrow.”

“But what would you have us do?” asked the chief, somewhat surprised.

“I should like to see you sack a village,” said Old Pluck. “How would that suit you, boys?”

The boys all declared that they thought that would do very well, to begin with.

The chief turned to his lieutenant and said, “Is there any village round here that has not been recently sacked?”

The lieutenant reflected a moment. “There is Buville,” he said. “We haven’t been there for six months.”

“Very good,” said the captain, rising; “we’ll sack Buville.”

In a short time the robber band, followed by the eleven boys, set out for Buville, a few miles distant. When they

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came within sight of the village the chief ordered his company to get behind a hedge which ran on one side of the road, and thus stealthily approach the place.

As soon as they were near enough the chief gave a loud whistle, and the whole company rushed wildly into the main street. The robbers flashed their drawn swords in the sunlight and brandished their spears, while the boys jumped and howled like so many apprentice bandits.

“Buville is ours !” cried the chief. “Come forth, ye base villagers and pay us tribute.”

“Come forth !” yelled little Tomtit. “Surrender, and trib !— I mean, pay tribute.”

At this the people began to flock into the street ; and presently the principal man of the village appeared, carrying a sheet of paper and pen and ink.

“Good-morning, bold sir,” he said, addressing the chief. “And what is it you’ll have to-day ? Shall we begin with flour ? How will two barrels do ?”

The chief nodded, and the man wrote down on his paper, two barrels of flour.

“Sugar, hams, and eggs, I suppose ?” continued the man.

The chief assented, and these were written down.

“Sundry groceries, of course ?” said he. “And would you care for any rich stuffs ?”

“Well, I don’t know that we need any just now,” said the chief ; “but you might throw in enough gold-threaded blue taffeta to make a jerkin for that little codger back there.”

“Three-quarters of a yard of blue taffeta,” wrote the man. And then he looked up and asked : “Anything else to-day ?”

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“I believe not,” said the chief. And then, brandishing his sword, he shouted, “Back to your homes, base villagers, and thank your stars that I let ye off so easily.”

“Home with ye!” shouted Tomtit, “and keep on star-thanking till we come again.”

“You need be in no hurry about sending those things,” said the chief to the principal man, as he was about to leave, “except the taffeta. I’d like to have that to-day.”

“Very good,” said the other; “I’ll send it immediately.”

As the robbers and boys departed, the latter were not at all slow to say that they were very much disappointed at what they had seen. It was tamer than a game of football.

“The fact is,” said the chief, “these villages have been sacked so often that the people are used to it, and they just walk out and pay up without making any row about it. It’s the easiest way, both for them and for us; but I admit that it is not very exciting.”

“I should say not,” said Old Pluck. “What I want is ‘the wild rush and dash, the clink and the clank, and the jingly-jank, hi-ho!’”

“That’s so!” shouted little Tomtit. “‘The clink and the clank, and the jingly-jank, ho-hi!’”

“I think we’ll next try a highway robbery,” said Old Pluck, “and stop a company of travellers on the road. That must be exciting.”

The boys all shouted their assent to this plan, and the robber chief led the way to the nearest highroad.

Here the whole party concealed themselves behind rocks and bushes, and waited patiently for a company of travellers

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to pass by. It was a long, long time before anybody came, and Tomtit had a sound nap in the shade of a hedge.

At last dust was seen in the distance, and before long five horsemen came riding up. They were all elderly men, and each of them led a mule or a horse, loaded with heavy panniers and packages. With drawn swords and brandished spears the robbers rushed out, followed by the boys, with yells and shouts. Instantly the elderly men stopped and descended from their horses.

“We surrender,” said the leader to the robber chief, “but we pray you will not pillage us utterly. We are going to seek a new home for our families, and for the money we get for the sale of these goods we hope to buy the little land we need. If you take these, you leave us nothing.”

The chief turned to old Pluck, and said: “Well, what shall we do about it? Shall we take their goods?”

“If you set out to do a thing,” said Old Pluck, “I don’t see why you don’t do it. There’s no sense in backing down.”

“That’s so!” cried Tomtit, who had just wakened up, and pushed his way through the hedge. “No backing down. Your money or your lives, travellers. Take notice of that.”

“Lead away the horses and mules,” said the chief to his men, “and let the travellers go.”

As they were leaving the scene of this exploit Old Pluck did not feel altogether easy in his mind. “There used to be a good habit among robbers,” he said to the chief, “and that was to give to the poor what they took from the rich. We will go along this road until we meet some really poor people, and we will give them these goods.”

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The robbers and boys, with the loaded horses and mules, walked along the road for nearly an hour, but met with no poor people. At last the chief declared that it was time to turn and go back to the castle, if they wanted to be there by dinner-time. The boys were very willing to go to dinner, and the whole party retraced their steps.

When they reached the spot where they had robbed the travellers they were surprised to see the five elderly men sitting by the roadside, groaning mournfully.

“What, here yet!” cried the chief. “What’s the matter?”

“There is no use going anywhere,” sadly replied the leader. “We have no money with which to buy even food to eat, and no goods to sell. We might as well die here as in any other place.”

“Boys,” exclaimed Old Pluck, after gazing a few moments on the unfortunate group, “I don’t believe we will ever find anybody as poor as these travellers now are. Let us give them the goods.”

“All right!” shouted the boys. And the loaded horses and mules were delivered to their former owners.

After dinner the boys began to grumble a good deal at the disappointments of the morning.

“We’ve done nothing yet,” cried Old Pluck, “that is half exciting enough, and we are bound to have a good time this afternoon. I go in for burning a town.”

“Hurrah!” said the boys. “We’ll burn a town!”

“That is a very serious thing,” said the chief. “Can’t you think of something else?”

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Old Pluck looked at him reproachfully. "We want something serious," he said. "What we've had so far is nothing but child's play."

The chief now saw that if he persisted in his objections he would hurt the feelings of the boys, and so he consented to burn a town. A few miles to the south there was a good-sized town, which the chief thought would burn very well, and thither the boys and robbers repaired, carrying blazing torches and firebrands.

When they reached the town and had proclaimed their purpose the inhabitants were filled with consternation. The people crowded into the street, and besought the robbers not to consume by fire their houses, their goods, and perhaps themselves and their children. The chief now took the boys aside, and consulted with them.

"I wish you would consider this matter a little more before you order me to set this town in flames. I am told that there is a magazine filled with gunpowder in the centre of the place, and there will be a terrible explosion when the fire reaches it."

"Hurrah!" cried the boys; "that will be splendid."

"Many of these citizens will lose their lives," said the chief, "and the rest will be utterly ruined."

"Now, look here," cried Old Pluck, "there's no use of always backing down. I'm tired of it."

"Very well," said the chief, "but you yourselves must inform the people of your decision."

"We'll do that," said Old Pluck. "Tomtit, you go tell those people that the town has got to burn, and there's no use talking any more about it."

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“That’s so,” said Tomtit. “She has got to burn.” And with his chest thrown out, and his hands in his pockets, the little fellow boldly advanced to the crowd of people.

As soon as he came near the old men, the women, and the children fell on their knees around him, and with tears and lamentations besought him to intercede with the robbers to save their town. Poor little Tomtit was very much moved by their wild grief and despair. Tears came into his eyes, and his little chest heaved with emotion; but he kept up a brave heart, and stood true to his companions.

“It’s no use,” he said, “for you to be blubbering and crying. Your houses have all got to be burned up, and the powder-magazine has got to go off with a big bang, and your furniture and beds will all be burned, and the babies’ cradles, and—and—I’m awful sorry for it,” and here the tears rolled down his cheeks; “but we boys have got to stick by each other, and you won’t have any homes, and I expect you will all perish—boo-hoo! But it won’t do to back down—boo-hoo-hoo! And the little babies will die; but the old thing has got to burn, you know.”

“Now look here, Tomtit,” said Old Pluck, who, with the rest of the boys, had drawn near, “don’t you be too hard on these people. I say, let the town stand.”

The boys agreed with one voice. And Tomtit, kicking one of his little legs above his head, shouted in ecstasy, “Yes, sir, let the town stand, babies and all.”

At this the women rushed up to the little fellow, and, seizing him in their arms, nearly kissed him to death.

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“I’d like to know what we are to do next,” sadly remarked Old Pluck.

“I’ll tell you,” cried Tomtit. “Let the chief steal a bride.”

The whole company stopped and looked at Tomtit. “Little boy,” said they, “what do you mean?”

“Why, of course,” said Tomtit, “I mean for the chief to seize a fair damsel and carry her off on his horse to be his bride, the wild hoofs clattering amid the crags.”

“Hoot!” cried all the boys in derision. And the chief said to Tomtit: “Little boy, I know of no fair damsel to steal, and, besides, I do not want a bride.”

“It’s pretty hard,” said Tomtit, wiping his eyes with his little sleeve. “I’ve done just what you fellows told me to, and now you won’t order anything I want to see.”

That night the boys ordered the robbers to hold high revels in the great hall. The flowing bowl was passed, and the great flagons were filled high; wild songs were sung, and the welkin was made to ring, as well as the robbers could do it, with jovial glee. The boys watched the proceedings for some time, but they did not find them very interesting, and soon went to bed.

The next morning Old Pluck called a meeting of his companions. “Boys,” he said, “this robber life is a good deal stupider than anything we left behind us. Let’s get back to school as fast as we can, and enjoy what is left of the Christmas fun. We will all admit that we are sorry for what we have done, and will promise not to run away again, and Tomtit can go to the master and tell him so.”

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"I'll be the first one whipped," ruefully remarked Tomtit; "but if you boys say so, of course I'll do it."

The boys now took leave of the robbers, Tomtit having been first presented with the piece of blue taffeta to make him a jerkin. When they reached the school Tomtit told his tale, and he was the only one who was not punished.

The next year these eleven boys were leaving school for a vacation, and on their way home they thought they would stop and see their old friends, the robbers. Much to their surprise, they found everything changed at the castle. It was now a boys' school; the chief was the principal, and each of the other robbers was a teacher.

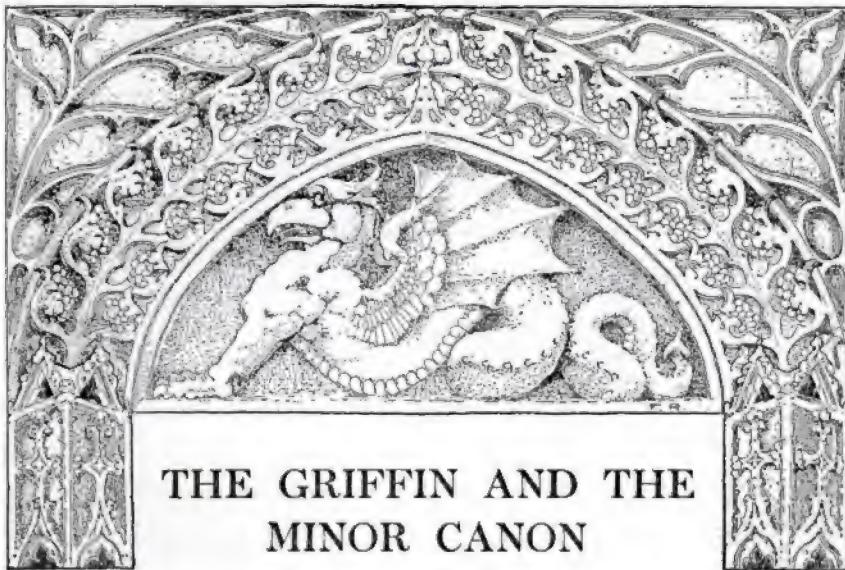
"You see," said the principal to Old Pluck, "we never knew how stupid and uninteresting a robber's life was until we were forced to lead it against our will. While you were here we learned to like boys very much, and so we concluded to set up this school."

"Do you have Christmas trees and carols and games?"

"Oh, yes," answered the principal.

"So do we," said Old Pluck.

"Yes, sir," exclaimed Tomtit, standing up very straight. "No more fire and tribute for us. We've grown out of that kind of nonsense."



THE GRIFFIN AND THE MINOR CANON

OVER the great door of an old, old church, which stood in a quiet town of a far-away land, there was carved in stone the figure of a large griffin. The old-time sculptor had done his work with great care, but the image he had made was not a pleasant one to look at. It had a large head, with enormous open mouth and savage teeth. From its back arose great wings, armed with sharp hooks and prongs. It had stout legs in front, with projecting claws, but there were no legs behind, the body running out into a long and powerful tail, finished off at the end with a barbed point. This tail was coiled up under him, the end sticking up just back of his wings.

The sculptor, or the people who had ordered this stone figure, had evidently been very much pleased with it, for little copies of it, also in stone, had been placed here and there along the sides of the church, not very far from the

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ground, so that people could easily look at them and ponder on their curious forms. There were a great many other sculptures on the outside of this church—saints, martyrs, grotesque heads of men, beasts, and birds, as well as those of other creatures which cannot be named, because nobody knows exactly what they were. But none were so curious and interesting as the great griffin over the door and the little griffins on the sides of the church.

A long, long distance from the town, in the midst of dreadful wilds scarcely known to man, there dwelt the Griffin whose image had been put up over the church door. In some way or other the old-time sculptor had seen him, and afterwards, to the best of his memory, had copied his figure in stone. The Griffin had never known this until, hundreds of years afterwards, he heard from a bird, from a wild animal, or in some manner which it is not easy to find out, that there was a likeness of him on the old church in the distant town.

Now, this Griffin had no idea whatever how he looked. He had never seen a mirror, and the streams where he lived were so turbulent and violent that a quiet piece of water, which would reflect the image of anything looking into it, could not be found. Being, as far as could be ascertained, the very last of his race, he had never seen another griffin. Therefore it was that, when he heard of this stone image of himself, he became very anxious to know what he looked like, and at last he determined to go to the old church and see for himself what manner of being he was. So he started off from the dreadful wilds, and flew on and on until he came to the countries inhabited by men, where his appear-

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ance in the air created great consternation. But he alighted nowhere, keeping up a steady flight until he reached the suburbs of the town which had his image on its church. Here, late in the afternoon, he alighted in a green meadow by the side of a brook, and stretched himself on the grass to rest. His great wings were tired, for he had not made such a long flight in a century or more.

The news of his coming spread quickly over the town, and the people, frightened nearly out of their wits by the arrival of so extraordinary a visitor, fled into their houses and shut themselves up. The Griffin called loudly for some one to come to him; but the more he called, the more afraid the people were to show themselves. At length he saw two laborers hurrying to their homes through the fields, and in a terrible voice he commanded them to stop. Not daring to disobey, the men stood, trembling.

“What is the matter with you all?” cried the Griffin. “Is there not a man in your town who is brave enough to speak to me?”

“I think,” said one of the laborers, his voice shaking so that his words could hardly be understood, “that — perhaps — the Minor Canon — would come.”

“Go, call him!” said the Griffin. “I want to see him.”

The Minor Canon, who filled a subordinate position in the old church, had just finished the afternoon service, and was coming out of a side door, with three aged women who had formed the week-day congregation. He was a young man of a kind disposition, and very anxious to do good to the people of the town. Apart from his duties in the church,

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where he conducted services every week-day, he visited the sick and the poor; counselled and assisted persons who were in trouble, and taught a school composed entirely of the bad children in the town, with whom nobody else would have anything to do. Whenever the people wanted something difficult done for them, they always went to the Minor Canon. Thus it was that the laborer thought of the young priest when he found that some one must come and speak to the Griffin.

The Minor Canon had not heard of the strange event, which was known to the whole town except himself and the three old women, and when he was informed of it, and was told that the Griffin had asked to see him, he was greatly amazed and frightened.

“Me!” he exclaimed. “He has never heard of me! What should he want with *me*?”

“Oh, you must go instantly!” cried the two men. “He is very angry now because he has been kept waiting so long, and nobody knows what may happen if you don’t hurry to him.”

The poor Minor Canon would rather have had his hand cut off than to go out to meet an angry griffin; but he felt that it was his duty to go, for it would be a woful thing if injury should come to the people of the town because he was not brave enough to obey the summons of the Griffin; so, pale and frightened, he started off.

“Well,” said the Griffin, as soon as the young man came near, “I am glad to see that there is some one who has the courage to come to me.”

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The Minor Canon did not feel very courageous, but he bowed his head.

“Is this the town,” said the Griffin, “where there is a church with a likeness of myself over one of the doors?”

The Minor Canon looked at the frightful creature before him, and saw that it was, without doubt, exactly like the stone image on the church. “Yes,” he said, “you are right.”

“Well, then,” said the Griffin, “will you take me to it? I wish very much to see it.”

The Minor Canon instantly thought that if the Griffin entered the town without the people knowing what he came for, some of them would probably be frightened to death, and so he sought to gain time to prepare their minds.

“It is growing dark now,” he said, very much afraid, as he spoke, that his words might enrage the Griffin, “and objects on the front of the church cannot be seen clearly. It will be better to wait until morning, if you wish to get a good view of the stone image of yourself.”

“That will suit me very well,” said the Griffin. “I see you are a man of good sense. I am tired, and I will take a nap here on this soft grass, while I cool my tail in the little stream that runs near me. The end of my tail gets red-hot when I am angry or excited, and it is quite warm now. So you may go; but be sure and come early to-morrow morning, and show me the way to the church.”

The Minor Canon was glad enough to take his leave, and hurried into the town. In front of the church he found a great many people assembled to hear his report of his interview with the Griffin. When they found that he had not

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come to spread ruin and devastation, but simply to see his stony likeness on the church, they showed neither relief nor gratification, but began to upbraid the Minor Canon for consenting to conduct the creature into the town.

“What could I do?” cried the young man. “If I should not bring him he would come himself, and perhaps end by setting fire to the town with his red-hot tail.”

Still the people were not satisfied, and a great many plans were proposed to prevent the Griffin from coming into the town. Some elderly persons urged that the young men should go out and kill him. But the young men scoffed at such a ridiculous idea. Then some one said that it would be a good thing to destroy the stone image, so that the Griffin would have no excuse for entering the town. This proposal was received with such favor that many of the people ran for hammers, chisels, and crowbars with which to tear down and break up the stone griffin. But the Minor Canon resisted this plan with all the strength of his mind and body. He assured the people that this action would enrage the Griffin beyond measure, for it would be impossible to conceal from him that his image had been destroyed during the night.

But they were so determined to break up the stone griffin that the Minor Canon saw that there was nothing for him to do but to stay there and protect it. All night he walked up and down in front of the church door, keeping away the men who brought ladders by which they might mount to the great stone griffin and knock it to pieces with their hammers and crowbars. After many hours the people were obliged to give up their attempts, and went home to sleep. But the Minor

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Canon remained at his post till early morning, and then he hurried away to the field where he had left the Griffin.

The monster had just awakened, and rising to his fore legs and shaking himself, he said that he was ready to go into the town. The Minor Canon, therefore, walked back, the Griffin flying slowly through the air at a short distance above the head of his guide. Not a person was to be seen in the streets, and they proceeded directly to the front of the church, where the Minor Canon pointed out the stone gryphon.

The real Griffin settled down in the little square before the church and gazed earnestly at his sculptured likeness. For a long time he looked at it. First he put his head on one side, and then he put it on the other. Then he shut his right eye and gazed with his left, after which he shut his left eye and gazed with his right. Then he moved a little to one side and looked at the image, then he moved the other way. After a while he said to the Minor Canon, who had been standing by all this time:

“It is, it must be, an excellent likeness! That breadth between the eyes, that expansive forehead, those massive jaws! I feel that it must resemble me. If there is any fault to find with it, it is that the neck seems a little stiff. But that is nothing. It is an admirable likeness — admirable!”

The Griffin sat looking at his image all the morning and all the afternoon. The Minor Canon had been afraid to go away and leave him, and had hoped all through the day that he would soon be satisfied with his inspection and fly away home. But by evening the poor young man was utterly exhausted, and felt that he must eat and sleep. He frankly

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admitted this fact to the Griffin, and asked him if he would not like something to eat. He said this because he felt obliged in politeness to do so; but as soon as he had spoken the words, he was seized with dread lest the monster should demand half a dozen babies, or some tempting repast of that kind.

“Oh, no,” said the Griffin, “I never eat between the equinoxes. At the vernal and at the autumnal equinox I take a good meal, and that lasts me for half a year. I am extremely regular in my habits, and do not think it healthful to eat at odd times. But if you need food, go and get it, and I will return to the soft grass where I slept last night, and take another nap.”

The next day the Griffin came again to the little square before the church, and remained there until evening, steadfastly regarding the stone griffin over the door. The Minor Canon came once or twice to look at him, and the Griffin seemed very glad to see him. But the young clergyman could not stay as he had done before, for he had many duties to perform. Nobody went to the church, but the people came to the Minor Canon’s house, and anxiously asked him how long the Griffin was going to stay.

“I do not know,” he answered, “but I think he will soon be satisfied with looking at his stone likeness, and then he will go away.”

But the Griffin did not go away. Morning after morning he went to the church, but after a time he did not stay there all day. He seemed to have taken a great fancy to the Minor Canon, and followed him about as he pursued his

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various avocations. He would wait for him at the side door of the church, for the Minor Canon held services every day, morning and evening, though nobody came now. "If any one should come," he said to himself, "I must be found at my post." When the young man came out, the Griffin would accompany him in his visits to the sick and the poor, and would often look into the windows of the school-house where the Minor Canon was teaching his unruly scholars. All the other schools were closed, but the parents of the Minor Canon's scholars forced them to go to school, because they were so bad they could not endure them all day at home—griffin or no griffin. But it must be said they generally behaved very well when that great monster sat up on his tail and looked in at the school-room window.

When it was perceived that the Griffin showed no sign of going away, all the people who were able to do so, left the town. The canons and the higher officers of the church had fled away during the first day of the Griffin's visit, leaving behind only the Minor Canon and some of the men who opened the doors and swept the church. All the citizens who could afford it shut up their houses and travelled to distant parts, and only the working-people and the poor were left behind. After some days these ventured to go about and attend to their business, for if they did not work they would starve. They were getting a little used to seeing the Griffin, and having been told that he did not eat between equinoxes, they did not feel so much afraid of him as before.

Day by day the Griffin became more and more attached to the Minor Canon. He kept near him a great part of the

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time, and often spent the night in front of the little house where the young clergyman lived alone. This strange companionship was often burdensome to the Minor Canon. But, on the other hand, he could not deny that he derived a great deal of benefit and instruction from it. The Griffin had lived for hundreds of years, and had seen much, and he told the Minor Canon many wonderful things.

“It is like reading an old book,” said the young clergyman to himself. “But how many books I would have had to read before I would have found out what the Griffin has told me about the earth, the air, the water, about minerals, and metals, and growing things, and all the wonders of the world !”

Thus the summer went on, and drew towards its close. And now the people of the town began to be very much troubled again.

“It will not be long,” they said, “before the autumnal equinox is here, and then that monster will want to eat. He will be dreadfully hungry, for he has taken so much exercise since his last meal. He will devour our children. Without doubt, he will eat them all. What is to be done ?”

To this question no one could give an answer, but all agreed that the Griffin must not be allowed to remain until the approaching equinox. After talking over the matter a great deal, a crowd of the people went to the Minor Canon, at a time when the Griffin was not with him.

“It is all your fault,” they said, “that that monster is among us. You brought him here, and you ought to see that he goes away. It is only on your account that he stays here at all, for, although he visits his image every day, he is

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with you the greater part of the time. If you were not here he would not stay. It is your duty to go away, and then he will follow you, and we shall be free from the dreadful danger which hangs over us."

"Go away!" cried the Minor Canon, greatly grieved at being spoken to in such a way. "Where shall I go? If I go to some other town, shall I not take this trouble there? Have I a right to do that?"

"No," said the people, "you must not go to any other town. There is no town far enough away. You must go to the dreadful wilds where the Griffin lives, and then he will follow you and stay there."

They did not say whether or not they expected the Minor Canon to stay there also, and he did not ask them anything about it. He bowed his head, and went into his house to think. The more he thought, the more clear it became to his mind that it was his duty to go away, and thus free the town from the presence of the Griffin.

That evening he packed a leather bag full of bread and meat, and early the next morning he set out on his journey to the dreadful wilds. It was a long, weary, and doleful journey, especially after he had gone beyond the habitations of men; but the Minor Canon kept on bravely, and never faltered. The way was longer than he had expected, and his provisions soon grew so scanty that he was obliged to eat but a little every day; but he kept up his courage, and pressed on, and after many days of toilsome travel he reached the dreadful wilds.

When the Griffin found that the Minor Canon had left

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the town, he seemed sorry, but showed no disposition to go and look for him. After a few days had passed, he became much annoyed, and asked some of the people where the Minor Canon had gone. But although the citizens had been so anxious that the young clergyman should go to the dreadful wilds, thinking that the Griffin would immediately follow him, they were now afraid to mention the Minor Canon's destination, for the monster seemed angry already, and if he should suspect their trick, he would doubtless become very much enraged. So every one said he did not know, and the Griffin wandered about disconsolate. One morning he looked into the Minor Canon's school-house, which was always empty now, and thought that it was a shame that everything should suffer on account of the young man's absence.

"It does not matter so much about the church," he said, "for nobody went there. But it is a pity about the school. I think I will teach it myself until he returns."

It was the hour for opening the school, and the Griffin went inside and pulled the rope which rang the school bell. Some of the children who heard the bell ran in to see what was the matter, supposing it to be a joke of one of their companions. But when they saw the Griffin they stood astonished and scared.

"Go tell the other scholars," said the monster, "that school is about to open, and that if they are not all here in ten minutes I shall come after them."

In seven minutes every scholar was in place.

Never was seen such an orderly school. Not a boy or girl

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moved or uttered a whisper. The Griffin climbed into the master's seat, his wide wings spread on each side of him, because he could not lean back in his chair while they stuck out behind, and his great tail coiled around in front of the desk, the barbed end sticking up, ready to tap any boy or girl who might misbehave. The Griffin now addressed the scholars, telling them that he intended to teach them while their master was away. In speaking he endeavored to imitate, as far as possible, the mild and gentle tones of the Minor Canon, but it must be admitted that in this he was not very successful. He had paid a good deal of attention to the studies of the school, and he determined not to attempt to teach them anything new, but to review them in what they had been studying. So he called up the various classes, and questioned them upon their previous lessons. The children racked their brains to remember what they had learned. They were so afraid of the Griffin's displeasure that they recited as they had never recited before. One of the boys, far down in his class, answered so well that the Griffin was astonished.

"I should think you would be at the head," said he. "I am sure you have never been in the habit of reciting so well. Why is this?"

"Because I did not choose to take the trouble," said the boy, trembling in his boots. He felt obliged to speak the truth, for all the children thought that the great eyes of the Griffin could see right through them, and that he would know when they told a falsehood.

"You ought to be ashamed of yourself," said the Griffin.

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therefore, mean and selfish. As for eating one of them, old or young, I could not think of it for a moment. In fact, there was only one creature in the whole place for whom I could have had any appetite, and that is the Minor Canon, who has gone away. He was brave and good and honest, and I think I should have relished him."

"Ah!" said one of the old men, very politely, "in that case I wish we had not sent him to the dreadful wilds!"

"What!" cried the Griffin. "What do you mean? Explain instantly what you are talking about!"

The old man, terribly frightened at what he had said, was obliged to tell how the Minor Canon had been sent away by the people, in the hope that the Griffin might be induced to follow him.

When the monster heard this he became furiously angry. He dashed away from the old men and, spreading his wings, flew backward and forward over the town. He was so much excited that his tail became red-hot, and glowed like a meteor against the evening sky. When at last he settled down in the little field where he usually rested, and thrust his tail into the brook, the steam arose like a cloud, and the water of the stream ran hot through the town. The citizens were greatly frightened, and bitterly blamed the old man for telling about the Minor Canon.

"It is plain," they said, "that the Griffin intended at last to go and look for him, and we should have been saved. Now who can tell what misery you have brought upon us?"

The Griffin did not remain long in the little field. As soon as his tail was cool he flew to the town hall and rang

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moved or uttered a whisper. The Griffin climbed into the master's seat, his wide wings spread on each side of him, because he could not lean back in his chair while they stuck out behind, and his great tail coiled around in front of the desk, the barbed end sticking up, ready to tap any boy or girl who might misbehave. The Griffin now addressed the scholars, telling them that he intended to teach them while their master was away. In speaking he endeavored to imitate, as far as possible, the mild and gentle tones of the Minor Canon, but it must be admitted that in this he was not very successful. He had paid a good deal of attention to the studies of the school, and he determined not to attempt to teach them anything new, but to review them in what they had been studying. So he called up the various classes, and questioned them upon their previous lessons. The children racked their brains to remember what they had learned. They were so afraid of the Griffin's displeasure that they recited as they had never recited before. One of the boys, far down in his class, answered so well that the Griffin was astonished.

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“Go down to the very tail of the class, and if you are not at the head in two days, I shall know the reason why.”

The next afternoon this boy was number one.

It was astonishing how much these children now learned of what they had been studying. It was as if they had been educated over again. The Griffin used no severity toward them, but there was a look about him which made them unwilling to go to bed until they were sure they knew their lessons for the next day.

The Griffin now thought that he ought to visit the sick and the poor, and he began to go about the town for this purpose. The effect upon the sick was miraculous. All, except those who were very ill indeed, jumped from their beds when they heard he was coming, and declared themselves quite well. To those who could not get up he gave herbs and roots, which none of them had ever before thought of as medicines, but which the Griffin had seen used in various parts of the world, and most of them recovered. But, for all that, they afterwards said that no matter what happened to them, they hoped that they should never again have such a doctor coming to their bedsides, feeling their pulses and looking at their tongues.

As for the poor, they seemed to have utterly disappeared. All those who had depended upon charity for their daily bread were now at work in some way or other, many of them offering to do odd jobs for their neighbors just for the sake of their meals—a thing which before had been seldom heard of in the town. The Griffin could find no one who needed his assistance.

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The summer now passed, and the autumnal equinox was rapidly approaching. The citizens were in a state of great alarm and anxiety. The Griffin showed no signs of going away, but seemed to have settled himself permanently among them. In a short time the day for his semi-annual meal would arrive, and then what would happen? The monster would certainly be very hungry, and would devour all their children.

Now they greatly regretted and lamented that they had sent away the Minor Canon. He was the only one on whom they could have depended in this trouble, for he could talk freely with the Griffin, and so find out what could be done. But it would not do to be inactive. Some step must be taken immediately. A meeting of the citizens was called, and two old men were appointed to go and talk to the Griffin. They were instructed to offer to prepare a splendid dinner for him on equinox day—one which would entirely satisfy his hunger. They would offer him the fattest mutton, the most tender beef, fish and game of various sorts, and anything of the kind he might fancy. If none of these suited, they were to mention that there was an orphan asylum in the next town.

“Anything would be better,” said the citizens, “than to have our dear children devoured.”

The old men went to the Griffin, but their propositions were not received with favor.

“From what I have seen of the people of this town,” said the monster, “I do not think I could relish anything which was prepared by them. They appear to be all cowards, and,

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therefore, mean and selfish. As for eating one of them, old or young, I could not think of it for a moment. In fact, there was only one creature in the whole place for whom I could have had any appetite, and that is the Minor Canon, who has gone away. He was brave and good and honest, and I think I should have relished him."

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The old man, terribly frightened at what he had said, was obliged to tell how the Minor Canon had been sent away by the people, in the hope that the Griffin might be induced to follow him.

When the monster heard this he became furiously angry. He dashed away from the old men and, spreading his wings, flew backward and forward over the town. He was so much excited that his tail became red-hot, and glowed like a meteor against the evening sky. When at last he settled down in the little field where he usually rested, and thrust his tail into the brook, the steam arose like a cloud, and the water of the stream ran hot through the town. The citizens were greatly frightened, and bitterly blamed the old man for telling about the Minor Canon.

"It is plain," they said, "that the Griffin intended at last to go and look for him, and we should have been saved. Now who can tell what misery you have brought upon us?"

The Griffin did not remain long in the little field. As soon as his tail was cool he flew to the town hall and rang

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the bell. The citizens knew that they were expected to come there, and although they were afraid to go, they were still more afraid to stay away, and they crowded into the hall. The Griffin was on the platform at one end, flapping his wings and walking up and down, and the end of his tail was still so warm that it slightly scorched the boards as he dragged it after him.

When everybody who was able to come was there, the Griffin stood still and addressed the meeting.

“I have had a contemptible opinion of you,” he said, “ever since I discovered what cowards you are, but I had no idea that you were so ungrateful, selfish, and cruel as I now find you to be. Here was your Minor Canon, who labored day and night for your good, and thought of nothing else but how he might benefit you and make you happy; and as soon as you imagine yourselves threatened with a danger,—for well I know you are dreadfully afraid of me,—you send him off, caring not whether he returns or perishes, hoping thereby to save yourselves. Now, I had conceived a great liking for that young man, and had intended, in a day or two, to go and look him up. But I have changed my mind about him. I shall go and find him, but I shall send him back here to live among you, and I intend that he shall enjoy the reward of his labor and his sacrifices. Go, some of you, to the officers of the church, who so cowardly ran away when I first came here, and tell them never to return to this town under penalty of death. And if, when your Minor Canon comes back to you, you do not bow yourselves before him, put him in the highest place among you, and serve and honor him all his life, beware of my terrible vengeance! There were

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only two good things in this town : the Minor Canon and the stone image of myself over your church door. One of these you have sent away, and the other I shall carry away myself."

With these words he dismissed the meeting ; and it was time, for the end of his tail had become so hot that there was danger of its setting fire to the building.

The next morning the Griffin came to the church, and tearing the stone image of himself from its fastenings over the great door, he grasped it with his powerful forelegs and flew up into the air. Then, after hovering over the town for a moment, he gave his tail an angry shake, and took up his flight to the dreadful wilds. When he reached this desolate region, he set the stone griffin upon a ledge of a rock which rose in front of the dismal cave he called his home. There the image occupied a position somewhat similar to that it had had over the church door ; and the Griffin, panting with the exertion of carrying such an enormous load to so great a distance, lay down upon the ground, and regarded it with much satisfaction. When he felt somewhat rested he went to look for the Minor Canon. He found the young man, weak and half-starved, lying under the shadow of a rock. After picking him up and carrying him to his cave, the Griffin flew away to a distant marsh, where he procured some roots and herbs which he well knew were strengthening and beneficial to man, though he had never tasted them himself. After eating these the Minor Canon was greatly revived, and sat up and listened while the Griffin told him what had happened in the town.

"Do you know," said the monster, when he had finished, "that I have had, and still have, a great liking for you ?"

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“I am very glad to hear it,” said the Minor Canon, with his usual politeness.

“I am not at all sure that you would be,” said the Griffin, “if you thoroughly understood the state of the case, but we will not consider that now. If some things were different, other things would be otherwise. I have been so enraged by discovering the manner in which you have been treated that I have determined that you shall at last enjoy the rewards and honors to which you are entitled. Lie down and have a good sleep, and then I will take you back to the town.”

As he heard these words, a look of trouble came over the young man’s face.

“You need not give yourself any anxiety,” said the Griffin, “about my return to the town. I shall not remain there. Now that I have that admirable likeness of myself in front of my cave, where I can sit at my leisure and gaze upon its noble features and magnificent proportions, I have no wish to see that abode of cowardly and selfish people.”

The Minor Canon, relieved from his fears, lay back, and dropped into a doze; and when he was sound asleep, the Griffin took him up and carried him back to the town. He arrived just before daybreak, and putting the young man gently on the grass in the little field where he himself used to rest, the monster, without having been seen by any of the people, flew back to his home.

When the Minor Canon made his appearance in the morning among the citizens, the enthusiasm and cordiality with which he was received were truly wonderful. He was taken to a house which had been occupied by one of the banished

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high officers of the place, and every one was anxious to do all that could be done for his health and comfort. The people crowded into the church when he held services, so that the three old women who used to be his week-day congregation could not get to the best seats, which they had always been in the habit of taking; and the parents of the bad children determined to reform them at home, in order that he might be spared the trouble of keeping up his former school. The Minor Canon was appointed to the highest office of the old church, and before he died he became a bishop.

During the first years after his return from the dreadful wilds, the people of the town looked up to him as a man to whom they were bound to do honor and reverence. But they often, also, looked up to the sky to see if there were any signs of the Griffin coming back. However, in the course of time they learned to honor and reverence their former Minor Canon without the fear of being punished if they did not do so.

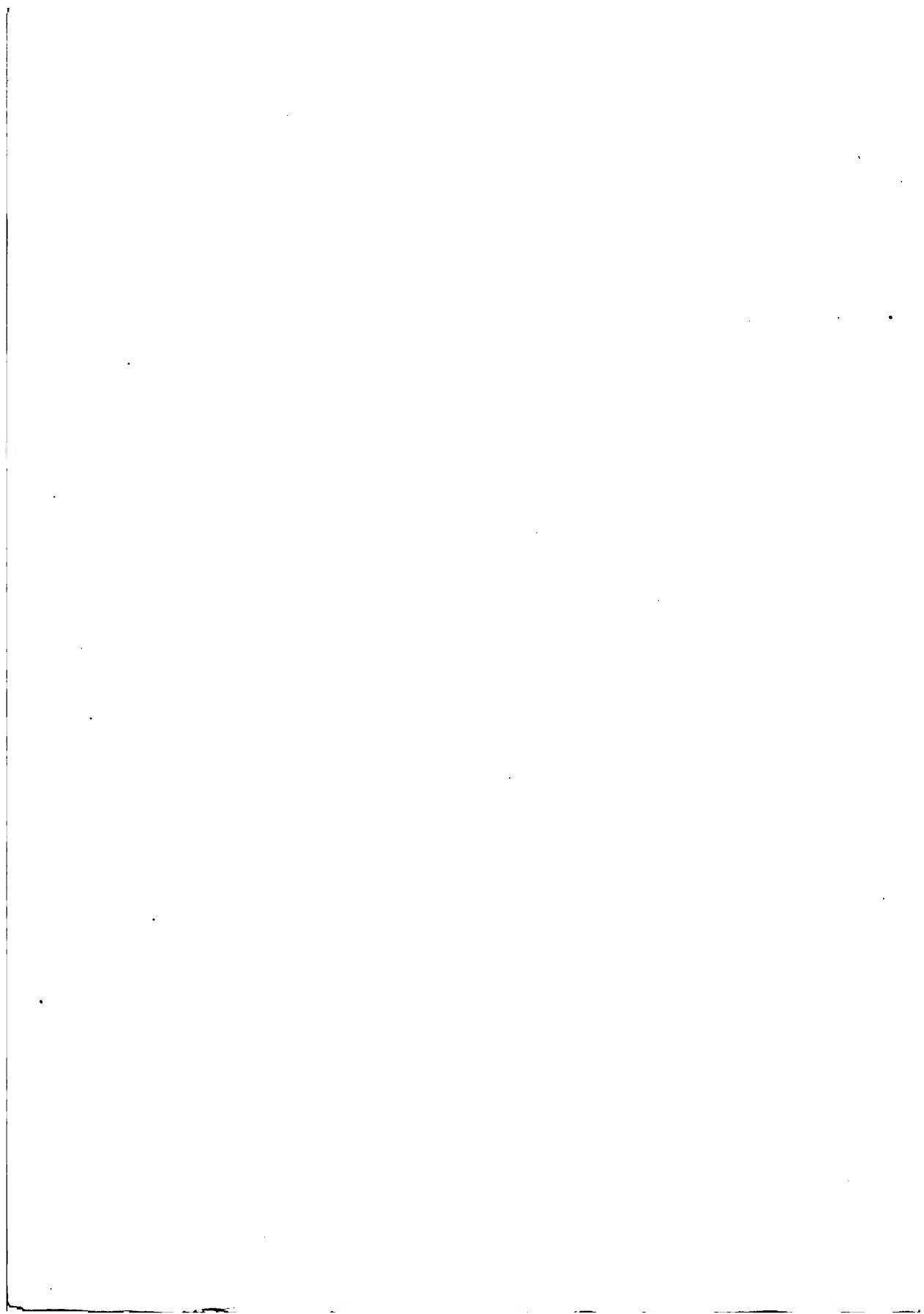
But they need never have been afraid of the Griffin. The autumnal equinox day came round, and the monster ate nothing. If he could not have the Minor Canon, he did not care for anything. So, lying down with his eyes fixed upon the great stone griffin, he gradually declined, and died. It was a good thing for some of the people of the town that they did not know this.

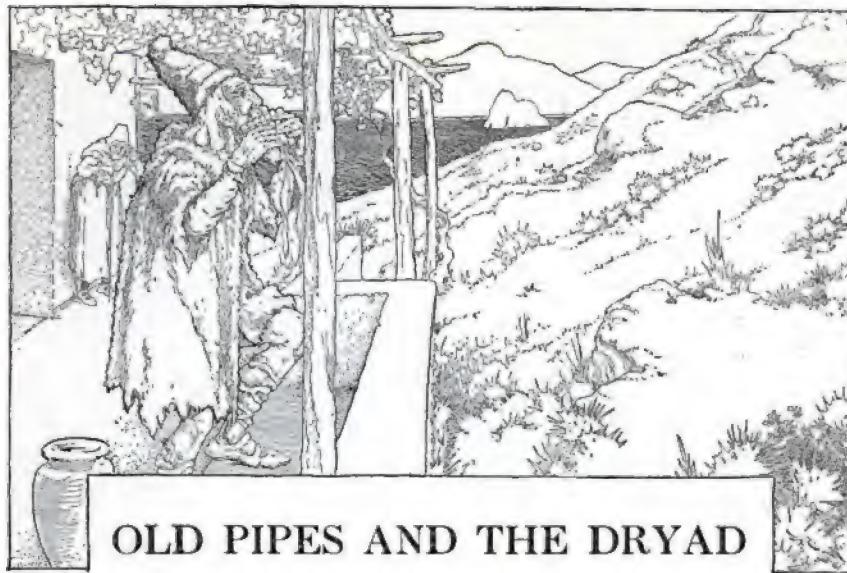
If you should ever visit the old town, you would still see the little griffins on the sides of the church, but the great stone griffin that was over the door is gone.



When he was sound asleep, the Griffin took him up and carried him back to the town.







OLD PIPES AND THE DRYAD

A MOUNTAIN brook ran through a little village. Over the brook there was a narrow bridge, and from the bridge a foot-path led out from the village and up the hillside to the cottage of Old Pipes and his mother.

For many, many years Old Pipes had been employed by the villagers to pipe the cattle down from the hills. Every afternoon, an hour before sunset, he would sit on a rock in front of his cottage and play on his pipes. Then all the flocks and herds that were grazing on the mountains would hear him, wherever they might happen to be, and would come down to the village — the cows by the easiest paths, the sheep by those not quite so easy, and the goats by the steep and rocky ways that were hardest of all.

But now, for a year or more, Old Pipes had not piped the cattle home. It is true that every afternoon he sat upon the rock and played upon his familiar instrument, but the cattle

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did not hear him. He had grown old, and his breath was feeble. The echoes of his cheerful notes, which used to come from the rocky hill on the other side of the valley, were heard no more ; and twenty yards from Old Pipes one could scarcely tell what tune he was playing. He had become somewhat deaf, and did not know that the sound of his pipes was so thin and weak, and that the cattle did not hear him. The cows, the sheep, and the goats came down every afternoon as before, but this was because two boys and a girl were sent up after them. The villagers did not wish the good old man to know that his piping was no longer of any use ; so they paid him his little salary every month, and said nothing about the two boys and the girl.

Old Pipes's mother was, of course, a great deal older than he was, and was as deaf as a gate,— posts, latch, hinges, and all,— and she never knew that the sound of her son's pipe did not spread over all the mountain-side and echo back strong and clear from the opposite hills. She was very fond of Old Pipes, and proud of his piping ; and as he was so much younger than she was, she never thought of him as being very old. She cooked for him, and made his bed, and mended his clothes ; and they lived very comfortably on his little salary.

One afternoon, at the end of the month, when Old Pipes had finished his piping, he took his stout staff and went down the hill to the village to receive the money for his month's work. The path seemed a great deal steeper and more difficult than it used to be ; and Old Pipes thought that it must have been washed by the rains and greatly damaged. He

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remembered it as a path that was quite easy to traverse either up or down. But Old Pipes had been a very active man, and as his mother was so much older than he was, he never thought of himself as aged and infirm.

When the Chief Villager had paid him, and he had talked a little with some of his friends, Old Pipes started to go home. But when he had crossed the bridge over the brook, and gone a short distance up the hillside, he became very tired, and sat down upon a stone. He had not been sitting there half a minute when along came two boys and a girl.

"Children," said Old Pipes, "I'm very tired to-night, and I don't believe I can climb up this steep path to my home. I think I shall have to ask you to help me."

"We will do that," said the boys and the girl, quite cheerfully. Then one boy took him by the right hand, and the other by the left, while the girl pushed him in the back. In this way he went up the hill quite easily, and soon reached his cottage door. Old Pipes gave each of the three children a copper coin, and then they sat down for a few minutes' rest before starting back to the village.

"I'm sorry that I tired you so much," said Old Pipes.

"Oh, that would not have tired us," said one of the boys, "if we had not been so far to-day after the cows, the sheep, and the goats. They rambled high up on the mountain, and we never before had such a time in finding them."

"Had to go after the cows, the sheep, and the goats!" exclaimed Old Pipes. "What do you mean by that?"

The girl, who stood behind the old man, shook her head, put her hand ~~on~~ her mouth, and made all sorts of signs to

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the boy to stop talking on this subject ; but he did not notice her, and promptly answered Old Pipes.

“ Why, you see, good sir,” said he, “ that as the cattle can’t hear your pipes now, somebody has to go after them every evening to drive them down from the mountain, and the Chief Villager has hired us three to do it. Generally it is not very hard work, but to-night the cattle had wandered far.”

“ How long have you been doing this ? ” asked the old man.

The girl shook her head and clapped her hand on her mouth more vigorously than before, but the boy went on.

“ I think it is about a year now,” he said, “ since the people first felt sure that the cattle could not hear your pipes, and from that time we’ve been driving them down. But we are rested now, and will go home. Good-night, sir.”

The three children then went down the hill, the girl scolding the boy all the way home. Old Pipes stood silent a few moments, and then he went into his cottage.

“ Mother,” he shouted, “ did you hear what those children said ? ”

“ Children ! ” exclaimed the old woman. “ I did not hear them. I did not know there were any children here.”

Then Old Pipes told his mother, shouting very loudly to make her hear, how the two boys and the girl had helped him up the hill, and what he had heard about his piping and the cattle.

“ They can’t hear you ? ” cried his mother. “ Why, what’s the matter with the cattle ? ”

“ Ah, me ! ” said Old Pipes. “ I don’t believe there’s any-

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thing the matter with the cattle. It must be with me and my pipes that there is something the matter. But one thing is certain: if I do not earn the wages the Chief Villager pays me, I shall not take them. I shall go straight down to the village and give back the money I received to-day."

"Nonsense!" cried his mother. "I'm sure you've piped as well as you could, and no more can be expected. And what are we to do without the money?"

"I don't know," said Old Pipes. "But I'm going down to the village to pay it back."

The sun had now set; but the moon was shining very brightly on the hillside, and Old Pipes could see his way very well. He did not take the same path by which he had gone before, but followed another, which led among the trees upon the hillside, and, though longer, was not so steep.

When he had gone about half-way, the old man sat down to rest, leaning his back against a great oak-tree. As he did so, he heard a sound like knocking inside the tree, and then a voice distinctly said:

"Let me out! let me out!"

Old Pipes instantly forgot that he was tired, and sprang to his feet. "This must be a Dryad tree!" he exclaimed. "If it is, I'll let her out."

Old Pipes had never, to his knowledge, seen a Dryad tree, but he knew there were such trees on the hillsides and the mountains, and that Dryads lived in them. He knew, too, that in the summer time, on those days when the moon rose before the sun went down, a Dryad could come out of her tree if any one could find the key which locked her in and turn it.

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Old Pipes closely examined the trunk of the tree, which stood in the full moonlight. "If I see that key," he said, "I shall surely turn it." Before long he perceived a piece of bark standing out from the tree, which appeared to him very much like the handle of a key. He took hold of it, and found he could turn it quite around. As he did so, a large part of the side of the tree was pushed open, and a beautiful Dryad stepped quickly out.

For a moment she stood motionless, gazing on the scene before her — the tranquil valley, the hills, the forest, and the mountain-side, all lying in the soft, clear light of the moon. "Oh, lovely! lovely!" she exclaimed. "How long it is since I have seen anything like this!" And then, turning to Old Pipes, she said: "How good of you to let me out! I am so happy and so thankful that I must kiss you, you dear old man!" And she threw her arms around the neck of Old Pipes, and kissed him on both cheeks. "You don't know," she then went on to say, "how doleful it is to be shut up so long in a tree. I don't mind it in the winter, for then I am glad to be sheltered, but in summer it is a rueful thing not to be able to see all the beauties of the world. And it's ever so long since I've been let out. People so seldom come this way, and when they do come at the right time they either don't hear me, or they are frightened and run away. But you, you dear old man, you were not frightened, and you looked and looked for the key, and you let me out, and now I shall not have to go back till winter has come and the air grows cold. Oh, it is glorious! What can I do for you to show you how grateful I am?"

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“I am very glad,” said Old Pipes, “that I let you out, since I see that it makes you so happy. But I must admit that I tried to find the key because I had a great desire to see a Dryad. But if you wish to do something for me, you can, if you happen to be going down toward the village.”

“To the village!” exclaimed the Dryad. “I will go anywhere for you, my kind old benefactor.”

“Well, then,” said Old Pipes. “I wish you would take this little bag of money to the Chief Villager, and tell him that Old Pipes cannot receive pay for the services which he does not perform. It is now more than a year that I have not been able to make the cattle hear me when I piped to call them home. I did not know this until to-night, but now that I know it I cannot keep the money, and so I send it back.” So handing the little bag to the Dryad, he bade her good night, and turned toward his cottage.

“Good night,” said the Dryad. “And I thank you over and over and over again, you good old man!”

Old Pipes walked toward his home, very glad to be saved the fatigue of going all the way down to the village and back again. “To be sure,” he said to himself, “this path does not seem at all steep, and I can walk along it very easily, but it would have tired me dreadfully to come up all the way from the village, especially as I could not have expected those children to help me again.” When he reached home, his mother was surprised to see him returning so soon.

“What!” she exclaimed, “have you already come back? What did the Chief Villager say? Did he take the money?”

Old Pipes was just about to tell her that he had sent

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the money to the village by a Dryad, when he suddenly reflected that his mother would be sure to disapprove such a proceeding, and so he merely said he had sent it by a person whom he had met.

“And how do you know that the person will ever take it to the Chief Villager?” cried his mother. “You will lose it, and the villagers will never get it. Oh, Pipes! Pipes! when will you be old enough to have ordinary common-sense?”

Old Pipes considered that as he was already seventy years of age he could scarcely expect to grow any wiser, but he made no remark on this subject, and saying that he doubted not that the money would go safely to its destination, he sat down to his supper. His mother scolded him roundly, but he did not mind it, and after supper he went out and sat on a rustic chair in front of the cottage to look at the moonlit village, and to wonder whether or not the Chief Villager really received the money. While he was doing these two things, he went fast asleep.

When Old Pipes left the Dryad, she did not go down to the village with the little bag of money. She held it in her hand, and thought about what she had heard.

“This is a good and honest old man,” she said, “and it is a shame that he should lose this money. He looked as if he needed it, and I don’t believe the people in the village will take it from one who has served them so long. Often, when in my tree, have I heard the sweet notes of his pipes. I am going to take the money back to him.” She did not start immediately, because there were so many beautiful things to

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look at. But after a while she went up to the cottage, and finding Old Pipes asleep in his chair, she slipped the little bag into his coat-pocket, and silently sped away.

The next day Old Pipes told his mother that he would go up the mountain and cut some wood. He had a right to get wood from the mountain, but for a long time he had been content to pick up the dead branches which lay about his cottage. To-day, however, he felt so strong and vigorous that he thought he would go and cut some fuel that would be better than this. He worked all the morning, and when he came back he did not feel at all tired, and had a very good appetite for his dinner.

Now, Old Pipes knew a good deal about Dryads, but there was one thing which, although he had heard, he had forgotten. This was that a kiss from a Dryad makes a person ten years younger. The people of the village knew this, and they were very careful not to let any child of ten years or younger go into the woods where the Dryads were supposed to be, for if they should chance to be kissed by one of these tree-nymphs, they would be set back so far that they would cease to exist. A story was told in the village that a very bad boy of eleven once ran away into the woods, and had an adventure of this kind, and when his mother found him he was a little baby of one year old. Taking advantage of her opportunity, she brought him up more carefully than she had done before, and he grew to be a very good boy indeed.

Now Old Pipes had been kissed twice by the Dryad, once on each cheek, and he therefore felt as vigorous and active as when he was a hale man of fifty. His mother noticed how

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much work he was doing, and told him that he need not try in that way to make up for the loss of his piping wages, for he would only tire himself out, and get sick. But her son answered that he had not felt so well for years, and that he was quite able to work. In the course of the afternoon, Old Pipes, for the first time that day, put his hand in his coat-pocket, and there, to his amazement, he found the little bag of money. "Well, well!" he exclaimed, "I am stupid indeed! I really thought that I had seen a Dryad, but when I sat down by that big oak-tree I must have gone to sleep and dreamed it all, and then I came home thinking I had given the money to a Dryad, when it was in my pocket all the time. But the Chief Villager shall have the money. I shall not take it to him to-day, but to-morrow I wish to go to the village to see some of my old friends, and then I shall give up the money."

Toward the close of the afternoon, Old Pipes, as had been his custom for so many years, took his pipes from the shelf on which they lay, and went out to the rock in front of the cottage.

"What are you going to do?" cried his mother. "If you will not consent to be paid, why do you pipe?"

"I am going to pipe for my own pleasure," said her son. "I am used to it, and I do not wish to give it up. It does not matter now whether the cattle hear me or not, and I am sure that my piping will injure no one."

When the good man began to play upon his favorite instrument he was astonished at the sound that came from it. The beautiful notes of the pipes sounded clear and strong

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down into the valley, and spread over the hills, and up the sides of the mountain beyond, while, after a little interval, an echo came back from the rocky hill on the other side of the valley.

“Ha, ha!” he cried, “what has happened to my pipes? They must have been stopped up of late, but now they are as clear and good as ever.”

Again the merry notes went sounding far and wide. The cattle on the mountain heard them, and those that were old enough remembered how these notes had called them from their pastures every evening, and so they started down the mountain-side, the others following.

The merry notes were heard in the village below, and the people were much astonished thereby. “Why, who can be blowing the pipes of Old Pipes?” they said. But as they were all very busy, no one went up to see. One thing, however, was plain enough: the cattle were coming down the mountain. So the two boys and the girl did not have to go after them, and had an hour for play, for which they were very glad.

The next morning Old Pipes started down to the village with his money, and on the way he met the Dryad. “Oh, ho!” he cried, “is that you? Why, I thought my letting you out of the tree was nothing but a dream.”

“A dream!” cried the Dryad. “If you only knew how happy you have made me, you would not think it merely a dream. And has it not benefited you? Do you not feel happier? Yesterday I heard you playing beautifully on your pipes.”

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“Yes, yes,” cried he. “I did not understand it before, but I see it all now. I have really grown younger. I thank you, I thank you, good Dryad, from the bottom of my heart. It was the finding of the money in my pocket that made me think it was a dream.”

“Oh, I put it in when you were asleep,” she said, laughing, “because I thought you ought to keep it. Good-by, kind, honest man. May you live long, and be as happy as I am now.”

Old Pipes was greatly delighted when he understood that he was really a younger man. But that made no difference about the money, and he kept on his way to the village. As soon as he reached it, he was eagerly questioned as to who had been playing his pipes the evening before, and when the people heard that it was himself, they were very much surprised. Thereupon Old Pipes told what had happened to him, and then there was greater wonder, with hearty congratulations and hand-shakes, for Old Pipes was liked by every one. The Chief Villager refused to take his money, and although Old Pipes said he had not earned it, every one present insisted that, as he could now play on his pipes as before, he should lose nothing because, for a time, he was unable to perform his duty.

So Old Pipes was obliged to keep his money, and after an hour or two spent in conversation with his friends, he returned to his cottage.

There was one individual, however, who was not at all pleased with what had happened to Old Pipes. This was an Echo-dwarf who lived on the hills on the other side of the

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valley, and whose duty it was to echo back the notes of the pipes whenever they could be heard. There were a great many other Echo-dwarfs on these hills, some of whom echoed back the songs of maidens, some the shouts of children, and others the music that was often heard in the village. But there was only one who could send back the strong notes of the pipes of Old Pipes, and this had been his sole duty for many years. But when the old man grew feeble, and the notes of his pipes could not be heard on the opposite hills, this Echo-dwarf had nothing to do, and he spent his time in delightful idleness ; and he slept so much and grew so fat that it made his companions laugh to see him walk.

On the afternoon on which, after so long an interval, the sound of the pipes was heard on the echo hills, this dwarf was fast asleep behind a rock. As soon as the first notes reached them, some of his companions ran to wake him. Rolling to his feet, he echoed back the merry tune of Old Pipes. Naturally, he was very much annoyed and indignant at being thus obliged to give up his life of comfortable leisure, and he hoped that this pipe-playing would not occur again.

But this afternoon he was awake and listening, and, sure enough, at the usual hour along came the notes of the pipes, as clear and strong as they ever had been, and he was obliged to work as long as Old Pipes played. The Echo-dwarf was very angry. He had supposed, of course, that the pipe-playing had ceased forever, and he felt that he had a right to be indignant at being thus deceived. He was so much disturbed that he made up his mind to go and try to find out whether this was to be a temporary matter or not. He had

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plenty of time, as the pipes were played but once a day, and he set off early in the morning for the hill on which Old Pipes lived. It was hard work for the fat little fellow, and when he had crossed the valley and had gone some distance into the woods on the hillside, he stopped to rest, and in a few minutes the Dryad came tripping along.

“Ho, ho!” exclaimed the dwarf, “what are you doing here? and how did you get out of your tree?”

“Doing!” cried the Dryad. “I am being happy, that’s what I am doing. I was let out of my tree by the good old man who plays the pipes to call the cattle down from the mountain, and it makes me happier to think that I have been of service to him. I gave him two kisses of gratitude, and now he is young enough to play his pipes as well as ever.”

The Echo-dwarf stepped forward, his face pale with passion. “Am I to believe,” he said, “that you are the cause of this great evil that has come upon me? that you are the wicked creature who has again started this old man upon his career of pipe-playing? What have I ever done to you that you should have condemned me for years and years to echo back the notes of those wretched pipes?”

At this the Dryad laughed loudly.

“What a funny little fellow you are!” she said. “Any one would think you had been condemned to toil from morning till night, while what you really have to do is merely to imitate for half an hour every day the merry notes of Old Pipes’s piping. Fie upon you, Echo-dwarf! You are lazy and selfish, and that is what is the matter with you. Instead of grumbling at being obliged to do a little wholesome work,

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which is less, I am sure, than that of any other Echo-dwarf upon the rocky hillside, you should rejoice at the good fortune of the old man who has regained so much of his strength and vigor. Go home and learn to be just and generous, and then, perhaps, you may be happy. Good-by."

"Insolent creature!" shouted the dwarf, as he shook his fat little fist at her. "I'll make you suffer for this. You shall find out what it is to heap injury and insult upon one like me, and to snatch from him the repose that he has earned by long years of toil." And shaking his head savagely, he hurried back to the rocky hillside.

Every afternoon the merry notes of the pipes of Old Pipes sounded down into the valley and over the hills and up the mountain-side, and every afternoon, when he had echoed them back, the little dwarf grew more and more angry with the Dryad. Each day, from early morning till it was time for him to go back to his duties upon the rocky hillside, he searched the woods for her. He intended, if he met her, to pretend to be very sorry for what he had said, and he thought he might be able to play a trick upon her which would revenge him well. One day, while thus wandering among the trees, he met Old Pipes. The Echo-dwarf did not generally care to see or to speak to ordinary people, but now he was so anxious to find the object of his search that he stopped and asked Old Pipes if he had seen the Dryad. The piper had not noticed the little fellow, and he looked down on him with some surprise.

"No," he said. "I have not seen her, and I have been looking everywhere for her."

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“ You ! ” cried the dwarf. “ What do you wish with her ? ”

Old Pipes then sat down on a stone, so that he should be nearer the ear of his small companion, and he told what the Dryad had done for him.

When the Echo-dwarf heard that this was the man whose pipes he was obliged to echo back every day, he would have slain him on the spot had he been able. But as he was not able, he merely ground his teeth and listened to the rest of the story.

“ I am looking for the Dryad now,” Old Pipes continued, “ on account of my aged mother. When I was old myself I did not notice how very aged my mother was ; but now it shocks me to see how feeble and decrepit her years have caused her to become, and I am looking for the Dryad to ask her to make my mother younger, as she made me.”

The eyes of the Echo-dwarf glistened. Here was a man who might help him in his plans.

“ Your idea is a good one,” he said to Old Pipes, “ and it does you honor. But you should know that a Dryad can make no person younger but one who lets her out of her tree. However, you can manage the affair very easily. All you need do is to find the Dryad, tell her what you want, and request her to step into her tree and be shut up for a short time. Then you will go and bring your mother to the tree, she will open it, and everything will be as you wish. Is not this a good plan ? ”

“ Excellent ! ” cried Old Pipes. “ I will go instantly and search more diligently for the Dryad.”

“ Take me with you,” said the Echo-dwarf. “ You can

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easily carry me on your strong shoulders, and I shall be glad to help you in any way that I can."

"Now, then," said the little fellow to himself, as Old Pipes carried him rapidly along, "if he persuades the Dryad to get into a tree,— and she is quite foolish enough to do it, — and then goes away to bring his mother, I shall take a stone or a club and I will break off the key of that tree, so that nobody can ever turn it again. Then Mistress Dryad will see what she has brought upon herself by her behavior to me."

Before long they came to the great oak tree in which the Dryad had lived, and, at a distance, they saw that beautiful creature herself coming toward them.

"How excellently well everything happens!" said the dwarf. "Put me down, and I will go. Your business with the Dryad is more important than mine, and you need not say anything about my having suggested your plan to you. I am willing that you should have all the credit of it yourself."

Old Pipes put the Echo-dwarf upon the ground, but the little rogue did not go away. He concealed himself between some low, mossy rocks, and he was so much of their color that you would not have noticed him if you had been looking straight at him.

When the Dryad came up, Old Pipes lost no time in telling her about his mother, and what he wished her to do. At first the Dryad answered nothing, but stood looking very sadly at Old Pipes.

"Do you really wish me to go into my tree again?" she said. "I should dreadfully dislike to do it, for I don't know

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what might happen. It is not at all necessary, for I could make your mother younger at any time if she would give me the opportunity. I had already thought of making you still happier in this way, and several times I have waited about your cottage, hoping to meet your aged mother; but she never comes outside, and you know a Dryad cannot enter a house. I cannot imagine what put this idea into your head. Did you think of it yourself?"

"No, I cannot say that I did," answered Old Pipes. "A little dwarf whom I met in the woods proposed it to me."

"Oh!" cried the Dryad, "now I see through it all. It is the scheme of that vile Echo-dwarf—your enemy and mine. Where is he? I should like to see him."

"I think he has gone away," said Old Pipes.

"No, he has not," said the Dryad, whose quick eyes perceived the Echo-dwarf among the rocks. "There he is. Seize him and drag him out, I beg of you."

Old Pipes perceived the dwarf as soon as he was pointed out to him, and running to the rocks, he caught the little fellow by the leg and pulled him out.

"Now, then," cried the Dryad, who had opened the door of the great oak, "just stick him in there, and we will shut him up. Then I shall be safe from his mischief for the rest of the time I am free."

Old Pipes thrust the Echo-dwarf into the tree. The Dryad pushed the door shut. There was a clicking sound of bark and wood, and no one would have noticed that the big oak had ever had an opening in it.

"There," said the Dryad. "Now we need not be afraid

*“Now, then,” cried the Dryad, who had opened the door of
the great oak, “just stick him in there.”*



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of him. And I assure you, my good piper, that I shall be very glad to make your mother younger as soon as I can. Will you not ask her to come out and meet me?"

"Of course I will," cried Old Pipes. "I will do it without delay."

Then, the Dryad by his side, he hurried to his cottage. But when he mentioned the matter to his mother, the old woman became very angry indeed. She did not believe in Dryads; and if they really did exist, she knew they must be witches and sorceresses, and she would have nothing to do with them. If her son had ever allowed himself to be kissed by one of them he ought to be ashamed of himself. As to its doing him the least bit of good, she did not believe a word of it. He felt better than he used to feel, but that was very common. She had sometimes felt that way herself, and she forbade him ever to mention a Dryad to her again.

That afternoon Old Pipes, feeling very sad that his plan in regard to his mother had failed, sat down upon the rock and played upon his pipes. The pleasant sounds went down the valley and up the hills and mountain, but, to the great surprise of some persons who happened to notice the fact, the notes were not echoed back from the rocky hillside, but from the woods on the side of the valley where Old Pipes lived.

The next day many of the villagers stopped in their work to listen to the echo of the pipes coming from the woods. The sound was not as clear and strong as it used to be when it was sent back from the rocky hillside, but it certainly came from among the trees. Such a thing as an echo changing its place in this way had never been heard of before, and nobody

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was able to explain how it could have happened. Old Pipes, however, knew very well that the sound came from the Echo-dwarf shut up in the great oak tree. The sides of the tree were thin, the sound of the pipes could be heard through them, and the dwarf was obliged by the laws of his being to echo back those notes whenever they came to him. But Old Pipes thought he might get the Dryad in trouble if he let any one know that the Echo-dwarf was shut up in the tree, and so he wisely said nothing about it.

One day the two boys and the girl who had helped Old Pipes up the hill were playing in the woods. Stopping near the great oak tree, they heard a sound of knocking within it, and then a voice plainly said :

“ Let me out ! let me out ! ”

For a moment the children stood still in astonishment and then one of the boys exclaimed :

“ Oh, it is a Dryad, like the one Old Pipes found ! Let’s let her out ! ”

“ What are you thinking of ? ” cried the girl. “ I am the oldest of all, and I am only thirteen. Do you wish to be turned into crawling babies ? Run ! run ! run ! ”

And the two boys and the girl dashed down into the valley as fast as their legs could carry them. There was no desire in their youthful hearts to be made younger than they were. For fear that their parents might think it well that they should commence their careers anew, they never said a word about finding the Dryad tree.

As the summer days went on, Old Pipes’s mother grew feebler and feebler. One day when her son was away, for he

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now frequently went into the woods to hunt or fish, or down into the valley to work, she arose from her knitting to prepare the simple dinner. But she felt so weak and tired that she was not able to do the work to which she had been so long accustomed. "Alas! alas!" she said, "the time has come when I am too old to work. My son will have to hire some one to come here and cook his meals, make his bed, and mend his clothes. Alas! alas! I had hoped that as long as I lived I should be able to do these things. But it is not so. I have grown utterly worthless, and some one else must prepare the dinner for my son. I wonder where he is." And tottering to the door, she went outside to look for him. She did not feel able to stand, and reaching the rustic chair, she sank into it quite exhausted, and soon fell asleep.

The Dryad, who had often come to the cottage to see if she could find an opportunity of carrying out Old Pipes's affectionate design, now happened by, and seeing that the much-desired occasion had come, she stepped up quietly behind the old woman and gently kissed her on each cheek, and then as quietly disappeared.

In a few minutes the mother of Old Pipes awoke, and looking up at the sun, she exclaimed: "Why, it is almost dinner-time! My son will be here presently, and I am not ready for him." And rising to her feet, she hurried into the house, made the fire, set the meat and vegetables to cook, laid the cloth, and by the time her son arrived the meal was on the table.

"How a little sleep does refresh one!" she said to herself, as she was bustling about. She was a woman of very vigorous constitution, and at seventy had been a great deal stronger and

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more active than her son was at that age. The moment Old Pipes saw his mother, he knew that the Dryad had been there. But while he felt as happy as a king, he was too wise to say anything about her.

“It is astonishing how well I feel to-day!” said his mother, “and either my hearing has improved or you speak much more plainly than you have done of late.”

The summer days went on and passed away, the leaves were falling from the trees, and the air was becoming cold.

“Nature has ceased to be lovely,” said the Dryad, “and the night winds chill me. It is time for me to go back into my comfortable quarters in the great oak. But first I must pay another visit to the cottage of Old Pipes.”

She found the piper and his mother sitting side by side on the rock in front of the door. The cattle were not to go to the mountain any more that season, and he was piping them down for the last time. Loud and merrily sounded the pipes of Old Pipes, and down the mountain-side came the cattle, the cows by the easiest paths, the sheep by those not quite so easy, and the goats by the most difficult ones among the rocks, while from the great oak tree were heard the echoes of the cheerful music.

“How happy they look, sitting there together!” said the Dryad, “and I don’t believe it will do them a bit of harm to be still younger.” And moving quietly up behind them, she first kissed Old Pipes on his cheek, and then his mother.

Old Pipes who had stopped playing, knew what it was, but he did not move, and said nothing. His mother, thinking that her son had kissed her, turned to him with a smile and kissed him in return. Then she arose and went into the cottage, a

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vigorous woman of sixty, followed by her son, erect and happy, and twenty years younger than herself.

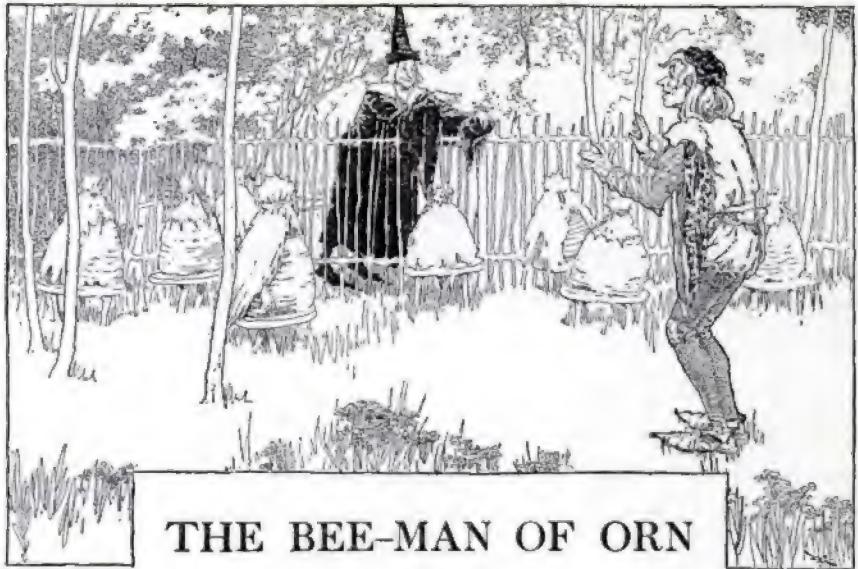
The Dryad sped away to the woods, shrugging her shoulders as she felt the cool evening wind.

When she reached the great oak, she turned the key and opened the door. "Come out," she said to the Echo-dwarf, who sat blinking within. "Winter is coming on, and I want the comfortable shelter of my tree for myself. The cattle have come down from the mountain for the last time this year, the pipes will no longer sound, and you can go to your rocks and have a holiday until next spring."

Upon hearing these words the dwarf skipped quickly out, and the Dryad entered the tree and pulled the door shut after her. "Now, then," she said to herself, "he can break off the key if he likes. It does not matter to me. Another will grow out next spring. And although the good piper made me no promise, I know that when the warm days arrive next year, he will come and let me out again."

The Echo-dwarf did not stop to break the key of the tree. He was too happy at being released to think of anything else, and he hastened as fast as he could to his home on the rocky hillside.

THE Dryad was not mistaken when she trusted in the piper. When the warm days came again he went to the oak tree to let her out. But, to his sorrow and surprise, he found the great tree lying upon the ground. A winter storm had blown it down, and it lay with its trunk shattered and split. And what became of the Dryad, no one ever knew.



THE BEE-MAN OF ORN

IN the ancient country of Orn there lived an old man who was called the Bee-man, because his whole time was spent in the company of bees. He lived in a small hut, which was nothing more than an immense beehive, for these little creatures had built their honeycombs in every corner of the one room it contained,—on the shelves, under the little table, all about the rough bench on which the old man sat, and even about the headboard and along the sides of his low bed. All day the air of the room was thick with buzzing insects, but this did not interfere in any way with the old Bee-man, who walked in among them, ate his meals, and went to sleep without the slightest fear of being stung. He had lived with the bees so long, they had become so accustomed to him, and his skin was so tough and hard, that they no more thought of stinging him than they would of stinging a tree or a stone.

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A swarm of bees made their hive in a pocket of his old leather doublet ; and when he put on this coat to take one of his long walks in the forest in search of wild bees' nests, he was very glad to have this hive with him, for if he did not find any wild honey, he would put his hand in his pocket and take out a piece of honeycomb for a luncheon. The bees in his pocket worked very industriously, and he was always certain of having something to eat with him wherever he went. He lived principally upon honey ; and when he needed bread or meat, he carried some fine combs to a village near by and bartered them for other food.

He was ugly, untidy, shrivelled, and sunburnt. He was poor, and the bees seemed to be his only friends. But, for all that, he was happy and contented. He had all the honey he wanted, and his bees, whom he considered the best company in the world, were as friendly and sociable as they could be, and seemed to increase in number every day.

One day there stopped at the hut of the Bee-man a Junior Sorcerer. This young person, who was a student of magic, necromancy, and the kindred arts, was much interested in the Bee-man, whom he had frequently noticed in his wanderings, and he considered him an admirable subject for study. He had had a great deal of useful practice in endeavoring to find out, by the various rules and laws of sorcery, exactly why the old Bee-man did not happen to be something that he was not, and why he was what he happened to be. He had studied this matter a long time, and had found out something.

“Do you know,” he said, when the Bee-man came out of his hut, “that you have been transformed ?”

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“What do you mean by that?” said the other, much surprised.

“You have surely heard of animals and human beings who have been magically transformed into different kinds of creatures?”

“Yes, I have heard of these things,” said the Bee-man.
“But what have I been transformed from?”

“That is more than I know,” said the Junior Sorcerer.
“But one thing is certain—you ought to be changed back.
If you will find out what you have been transformed from,
I will see that you are made all right again. Nothing would
please me better than to attend to such a case.”

Then, having a great many things to study and investigate, the Junior Sorcerer went his way.

This information greatly disturbed the mind of the Bee-man. If he had been changed from something else, he ought to be that other thing, whatever it was. He ran after the young man, and overtook him.

“If you know, kind sir,” he said, “that I have been transformed, you surely are able to tell me what it is that I was.”

“No,” said the Junior Sorcerer, “my studies have not proceeded far enough for that. When I become a senior I can tell you all about it. But, in the meantime, it will be well for you to try to discover for yourself your original form, and when you have done that, I will get some of the learned masters of my art to restore you to it. It will be easy enough to do that, but you cannot expect them to take the time and trouble to find out what it was.”

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With these words, he hurried away, and was soon lost to view.

Greatly disquieted, the Bee-man retraced his steps, and went to his hut. Never before had he heard anything which had so troubled him.

“I wonder what I was transformed from,” he thought, seating himself on his rough bench. “Could it have been a giant, or a powerful prince, or some gorgeous being whom the magicians or the fairies wished to punish? It may be that I was a dog or a horse, or perhaps a fiery dragon or a horrid snake. I hope it was not one of these. But, whatever it was, every one has certainly a right to his original form, and I am resolved to find out mine. I will start early to-morrow morning, and I am sorry now I have not more pockets to my old doublet, so that I might carry more bees and more honey for my journey.”

He spent the rest of the day in making a hive of twigs and straw, and when he had transferred to this some honey-combs and a colony of bees which had just swarmed, he rose before sunrise the next day, put on his leather doublet, bound his new hive to his back, and set forth on his quest, the bees who were to accompany him buzzing about him like a cloud.

As the Bee-man passed through the little village the people greatly wondered at his queer appearance, with the hive upon his back. “The Bee-man is going on a long expedition this time,” they said. But no one imagined the strange business on which he was bent. About noon he sat down under a tree, near a beautiful meadow covered with blossoms, and ate a little honey. Then he untied his

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hive and stretched himself out on the grass to rest. As he gazed upon his bees hovering above him, some going out to the blossoms in the sunshine, and some returning laden with the sweet pollen, he said to himself: "They know just what they have to do, and they do it. But alas for me! I know not what I may have to do. And yet, whatever it may be, I am determined to do it. In some way or other I will find out what was my original form, and then I will have myself changed back to it."

And now the thought again came to him that perhaps his original form might have been something very disagreeable, or even horrid.

"But it does not matter," he said sturdily. "Whatever I was, that shall I be again. It is not right for any one to retain a form which does not properly belong to him. I have no doubt I shall discover my original form in the same way that I find the trees in which the wild bees hive. When I first catch sight of a bee tree I am drawn toward it, I know not how. Something says to me: 'That is what you are looking for.' In the same way I believe that I shall find my original form. When I see it, I shall be drawn toward it. Something will say to me: 'That is it.'"

When the Bee-man had rested he started off again, and in about an hour he entered a fair domain. Around him were beautiful lawns, grand trees, and lovely gardens, while at a little distance stood the stately palace of the Lord of the Domain. Richly dressed people were walking about or sitting in the shade of the trees and arbors, splendidly capari-

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soned horses were waiting for their riders, and everywhere were seen signs of opulence and gayety.

“I think,” said the Bee-man to himself, “that I should like to stop here for a time. If it should happen that I was originally like any of these happy creatures it would please me much.”

He untied his hive, and hid it behind some bushes, and taking off his old doublet, laid that beside it. It would not do to have his bees flying about him if he wished to go among the inhabitants of this fair domain.

For two days the Bee-man wandered about the palace and its grounds, avoiding notice as much as possible, but looking at everything. He saw handsome men and lovely ladies, the finest horses, dogs, and cattle that were ever known, beautiful birds in cages, and fishes in crystal globes, and it seemed to him that the best of all living things were here collected.

At the close of the second day the Bee-man said to himself: “There is one being here towards whom I feel very much drawn, and that is the Lord of the Domain. I cannot feel certain that I was once like him, but it would be a very fine thing if it were so; and it seems impossible for me to be drawn toward any other being in the domain when I look upon him, so handsome, rich, and powerful. But I must observe him more closely, and feel more sure of the matter, before applying to the sorcerers to change me back into a lord of a fair domain.”

The next morning the Bee-man saw the Lord of the Domain walking in his gardens. He slipped along the shady

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paths, and followed him so as to observe him closely, and find out if he were really drawn toward this noble and handsome being. The Lord of the Domain walked on for some time, not noticing that the Bee-man was behind him. But suddenly turning, he saw the little old man.

“What are you doing here, you vile beggar?” he cried, and he gave him a kick that sent him into some bushes that grew by the side of the path.

The Bee-man scrambled to his feet, and ran as fast as he could to the place where he had hidden his hive and his old doublet.

“If I am certain of anything,” he thought, “it is that I was never a person who would kick a poor old man. I shall leave this place. I was transformed from nothing that I see here.”

He now travelled for a day or two longer, and then he came to a great black mountain, near the bottom of which was an opening like the mouth of a cave.

This mountain, he had heard, was filled with caverns and underground passages, which were the abodes of dragons, evil spirits, and horrid creatures of all kinds.

“Ah me!” said the Bee-man, with a sigh, “I suppose I ought to visit this place. If I am going to do this thing properly, I should look on all sides of the subject, and I may have been one of those dreadful creatures myself.”

Thereupon he went to the mountain, and as he approached the opening of the passage which led into its inmost recesses, he saw, sitting upon the ground, and leaning his back against a tree, a Languid Youth.

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“Good day,” said this individual, when he saw the Bee-man. “Are you going inside?”

“Yes,” said the Bee-man, “that is what I intend to do.”

“Then,” said the Languid Youth, slowly rising to his feet, “I think I will go with you. I was told that if I went in there I should get my energies toned up, and they need it very much. But I did not feel equal to entering by myself, and I thought I would wait until some one came who was going in. I am very glad to see you, and we will enter together.”

So the two went into the cave, and they had proceeded but a short distance when they met a very little creature, whom it was easy to recognize as a Very Imp. He was about two feet high, and resembled in color a freshly polished pair of boots. He was extremely lively and active, and came bounding toward them.

“What did you two people come here for?” he asked.

“I came,” said the Languid Youth, “to have my energies toned up.”

“You have come to the right place,” said the Very Imp. “We will tone you up. And what does that old Bee-man want?”

“He has been transformed from something, and wants to find out what it is. He thinks he may have been one of the things in here.”

“I should not wonder if that were so,” said the Very Imp, rolling his head on one side and eying the Bee-man with a critical gaze. “All right,” continued the Very Imp, “he can go around and pick out his previous existence. We have

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here all sorts of vile creepers, crawlers, hissers, and snorters. I suppose he thinks anything will be better than a Bee-man."

"It is not because I want to be better than I am," said the Bee-man, "that I started out on this search. I have simply an honest desire to become what I originally was."

"Oh! that is it, is it?" said the other. "There is an idiotic moon-calf here, with a clam head, which must be very much like what you used to be."

"Nonsense," said the Bee-man. "You have not the least idea what an honest purpose is. I shall go about and see for myself."

"Go on," said the Very Imp, "and I will attend to this fellow who wants to be toned up." So saying, he joined the Languid Youth.

"Look here," said that individual, regarding him with interest, "do you black and shine yourself every morning?"

"No," said the other, "it is waterproof varnish. You want to be invigorated, don't you? Well, I will tell you a splendid way to begin. You see that Bee-man has put down his hive and his coat with the bees in it. Just wait till he gets out of sight, and then catch a lot of those bees and squeeze them flat. If you spread them on a sticky rag, and make a plaster, and put it on the small of your back, it will invigorate you like everything, especially if some of the bees are not quite dead."

"Yes," said the Languid Youth, looking at him with his mild eyes, "but if I had energy enough to catch a bee I would be satisfied. Suppose you catch a lot for me."

"The subject is changed," said the Very Imp. "We are

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now about to visit the spacious chamber of the King of the Snapdragons."

"That is a flower," said the Languid Youth.

"You will find him a gay old blossom," said the other. "When he has chased you round his room, and has blown sparks at you, and has snorted and howled, and cracked his tail, and snapped his jaws like a pair of anvils, your energies will be toned up higher than ever before in your life."

"No doubt of it," said the Languid Youth. "But I think I will begin with something a little milder."

"Well, then," said the other, "there is a flat-tailed Demon of the Gorge in here. He is generally asleep, and, if you say so, you can slip into the farthest corner of his cave, and I'll solder his tail to the opposite wall. Then he will rage and roar, but he can't get at you, for he does n't reach all the way across his cave; I have measured him. It will tone you up wonderfully to sit there and watch him."

"Very likely," said the Languid Youth. "But I would rather stay outside and let you go up in the corner. The performance in that way will be more interesting to me."

"You are dreadfully hard to please," said the Very Imp. "I have offered them to you loose, and I have offered them fastened to a wall, and now the best thing I can do is to give you a chance at one of them that can't move at all. It is the Ghastly Griffin, and is enchanted. He can't stir so much as the tip of his whiskers for a thousand years. You can go to his cave and examine him just as if he were stuffed, and then you can sit on his back and think how it would be if you should live to be a thousand years old, and he should wake up

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“His energies must have been toned up a good deal,” said the Bee-man.

“Toned up! I should say so!” cried the other. “I raised a howl, and a Scissor-jawed Clipper came out of his hole, and got after him. But that lazy fool ran so fast he could not be caught.”

The Bee-man now ran on, and soon overtook the Languid Youth.

“You need not be in a hurry now,” said the latter, “for the rules of this institution don’t allow the creatures inside to come out of this opening, or to hang around it. If they did, they would frighten away visitors. They go in and out of holes in the upper part of the mountain.”

The two proceeded on their way.

“What are you going to do with that baby?” said the Languid Youth.

“I shall carry it along with me as I go on with my search,” said the Bee-man, “and perhaps I may find its mother. If I do not, I shall give it to somebody in the little village yonder. Anything would be better than leaving it to be devoured by that horrid dragon.”

“Let me carry it. I feel quite strong enough now to carry a baby.”

“Thank you,” said the Bee-man, “but I can take it myself. I like to carry something, and I have now neither my hive nor my doublet.”

“It is very well that you had to leave them behind,” said the Youth, “for the bees would have stung the baby.”

“My bees never sting babies,” said the other.

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while you are sitting there. It would be easy to imagine a lot of horrible things he would do to you when you look at his open mouth with its awful fangs, his dreadful claws, and his horrible wings all covered with spikes."

"I think that might suit me," said the Languid Youth. "I would much rather imagine the exercises of these monsters than to see them really going on."

"Come on, then," said the Very Imp, and he led the way to the cave of the Ghastly Griffin.

The Bee-man went by himself through a great part of the mountain, and looked into many of its gloomy caves and recesses, recoiling in horror from most of the dreadful monsters who met his eyes. While he was wandering about, an awful roar was heard resounding through the passages of the mountain, and soon there came flapping along an enormous dragon, with body black as night, and wings and tail of fiery red. In his great fore-claws he bore a little baby.

"Horrible!" exclaimed the Bee-man. "He is taking that little creature to some place to devour it."

He saw the dragon enter a cave not far away, and following, looked in. The dragon was crouched upon the ground, with the little baby lying before him. It did not seem to be hurt, but was frightened and crying. The monster was looking upon it with delight, as if he intended to make a dainty meal of it as soon as his appetite should be a little stronger.

"It is too bad!" thought the Bee-man. "Somebody ought to do something." And turning around, he ran away as fast as he could.

He ran through various passages until he came to the spot

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where he had left his beehive. Picking it up, he hurried back, carrying the hive in his two hands before him. When he reached the cave of the dragon, he looked in and saw the monster still crouched over the weeping child. Without a moment's hesitation, the Bee-man rushed into the cave and threw his hive straight into the face of the dragon. The bees, enraged by the shock, rushed out in an angry crowd, and immediately fell upon the head, mouth, eyes, and nose of the dragon. The great monster, astounded by this sudden attack, and driven almost wild by the numberless stings of the bees, sprang back to the farthest portion of his cave, still followed by his relentless enemies, at whom he flapped wildly with his great wings and struck with his paws. While the dragon was thus engaged with the bees, the Bee-man rushed forward, seized the child, and hurried away. He did not stop to pick up his doublet, but kept on until he reached the entrance of the caves. There he saw the Very Imp hopping along on one leg, and rubbing his back and shoulders with his hands ; he stopped to inquire what was the matter, and what had become of the Languid Youth.

“ He is no kind of a fellow,” said the Very Imp. “ He disappointed me dreadfully. I took him up to the Ghastly Griffin, and told him the thing was enchanted, and that he might sit on its back and think about what it could do if it were awake. But when he came near it the wretched creature opened its eyes and raised its head, and then you ought to have seen how mad that simpleton was. He made a dash at me and seized me by the ears. He kicked and beat me till I can scarcely move.”

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“His energies must have been toned up a good deal,” said the Bee-man.

“Toned up! I should say so!” cried the other. “I raised a howl, and a Scissor-jawed Clipper came out of his hole, and got after him. But that lazy fool ran so fast he could not be caught.”

The Bee-man now ran on, and soon overtook the Languid Youth.

“You need not be in a hurry now,” said the latter, “for the rules of this institution don’t allow the creatures inside to come out of this opening, or to hang around it. If they did, they would frighten away visitors. They go in and out of holes in the upper part of the mountain.”

The two proceeded on their way.

“What are you going to do with that baby?” said the Languid Youth.

“I shall carry it along with me as I go on with my search,” said the Bee-man, “and perhaps I may find its mother. If I do not, I shall give it to somebody in the little village yonder. Anything would be better than leaving it to be devoured by that horrid dragon.”

“Let me carry it. I feel quite strong enough now to carry a baby.”

“Thank you,” said the Bee-man, “but I can take it myself. I like to carry something, and I have now neither my hive nor my doublet.”

“It is very well that you had to leave them behind,” said the Youth, “for the bees would have stung the baby.”

“My bees never sting babies,” said the other.

While the Dragon was thus engaged with the bees, the Bee-man rushed forward, seized the child, and hurried away.





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“They probably never had a chance,” remarked his companion.

They soon entered the village, and after walking a short distance the Youth exclaimed: “Do you see that woman over there, sitting at the door of her house? She has beautiful hair, and she is tearing it all to pieces. She should not be allowed to do that.”

“No,” said the Bee-man. “Her friends should tie her hands.”

“Perhaps she is the mother of this child,” said the Youth, “and if you give it to her she will no longer think of tearing her hair.”

“But,” said the Bee-man, “you don’t really think this is her child?”

“Suppose you go over and see,” said the other.

The Bee-man hesitated a moment, and then he walked toward the woman. Hearing him coming, she raised her head, and when she saw the child she rushed toward it, snatched it into her arms, and screaming with joy, she covered it with kisses. Then with happy tears she begged to know the story of the rescue of her child, whom she never expected to see again. She loaded the Bee-man with thanks and blessings; the friends and neighbors gathered around and there was great rejoicing. The mother urged the Bee-man and the Youth to stay with her and rest and refresh themselves, which they were glad to do, as they were tired and hungry.

They remained at the cottage all night, and in the afternoon of the next day the Bee-man said to the Youth: “It may seem an odd thing to you, but never in all my life

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have I felt myself drawn toward any living being as I am drawn toward this baby. Therefore I believe that I have been transformed from a baby."

"Good!" cried the Youth. "It is my opinion that you have hit the truth. And would you really like to be changed back to your original form?"

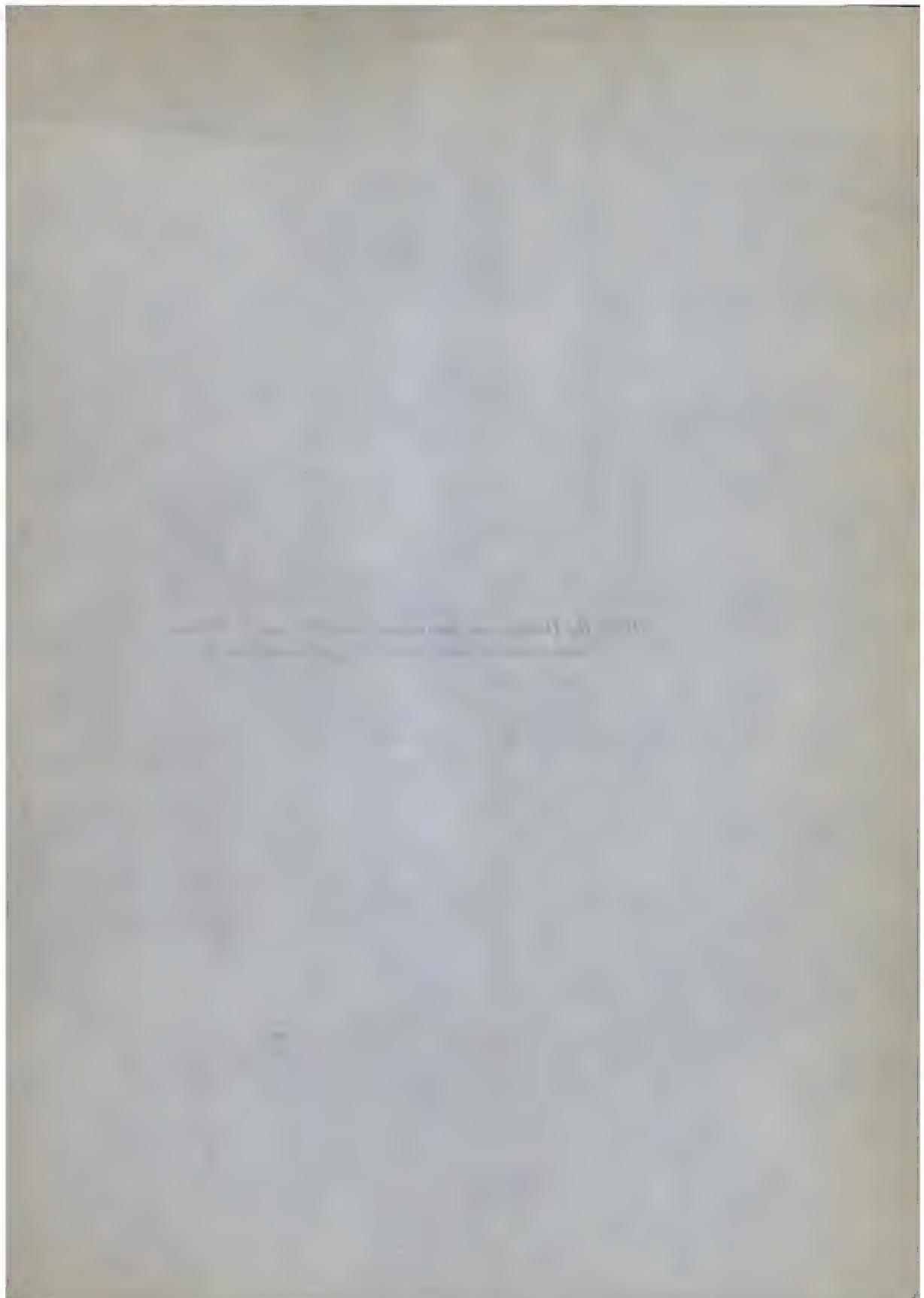
"Indeed I would!" said the Bee-man. "I have the strongest yearning to be what I originally was."

The Youth, who had now lost every trace of languid feeling, took a great interest in the matter, and early the next morning started off to inform the Junior Sorcerer that the Bee-man had discovered what he had been transformed from, and desired to be changed back to it.

The Junior Sorcerer and his learned masters were filled with enthusiasm when they heard this report, and they at once set out for the mother's cottage, where, by magic arts, the Bee-man was changed back into a baby. The mother was so grateful for what the Bee-man had done for her that she agreed to take charge of this baby and to bring it up with her own.

"It will be a grand thing for him," said the Junior Sorcerer, "and I am glad I studied his case. He will now have a fresh start in life, and will have a chance to become something better than a miserable old man living in a wretched hut, with no friends or companions but buzzing bees."

The Junior Sorcerer and his masters then returned to their homes, happy in the success of their great performance. And the Youth went back to his home anxious to begin a life of activity and energy.

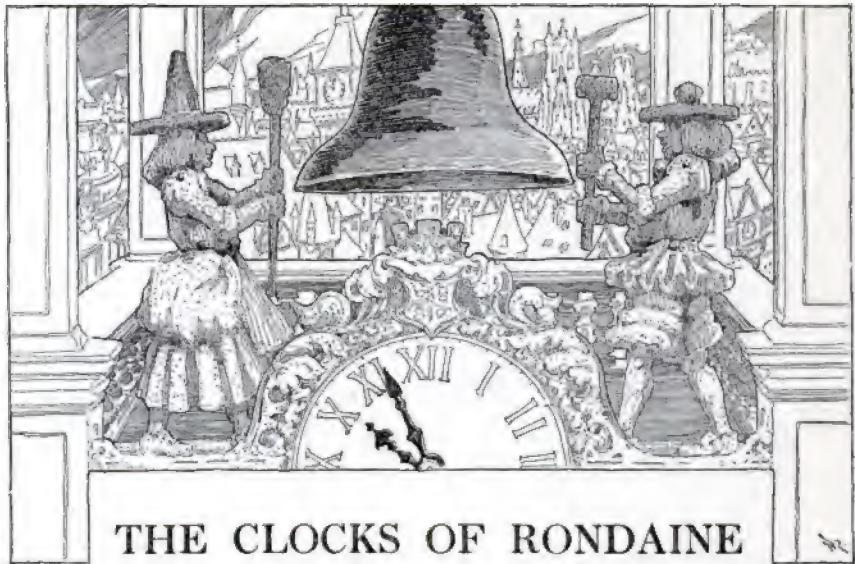


While the Dragon was thus engaged with the bees, the Bee-man rushed forward, seized the child, and hurried away.

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Years and years afterward, when the Junior Sorcerer had become a Senior and was very old indeed, he passed through the country of Orn, and noticed a small hut about which swarms of bees were flying. He approached it, and looking in at the door he saw an old man in a leather doublet, sitting at a table, eating honey. By his magic art he knew this was the baby which had been transformed from the Bee-man.

“Upon my word!” exclaimed the Sorcerer, “he has grown into the same thing again!”



THE CLOCKS OF RONDAINE

CENTURIES ago, there stood on the banks of a river a little town called Rondaine. The river was a long and winding stream which ran through different countries, and was sometimes narrow and swift, and sometimes broad and placid; sometimes hurrying through mountain passes, and again meandering quietly through fertile plains; in some places of a blue color and almost transparent, and in others of a dark and sombre hue; and so it changed and changed until it threw itself into a warm, far-spreading sea.

But it was quite otherwise with the little town. As far back as anybody could remember, it had always been the same that it was at the time of our story, and the people who lived there could see no reason to suppose that it would ever be different from what it was then. It was a pleasant little town, its citizens were very happy, and why there should be

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any change in it, the most astute old man in all Rondaine could not have told you.

If Rondaine had been famed for anything at all, it would have been for the number of its clocks. It had many churches, some little ones in dark side streets, and some larger ones in wider thoroughfares, besides, here and there, a very good-sized church fronting on a park or open square; and in the steeple of each of these churches there was a clock. There were town buildings, very old ones, which stood upon the great central square. Each of these had a tower, and in each tower was a clock. Then, there were clocks at street corners; two clocks in the market-place; clocks over shop doors; a clock at each end of the bridge, and several large clocks a little way out of town. Many of these clocks were fashioned in some quaint and curious way. In one of the largest a stone man came out and struck the hours with a stone hammer, while a stone woman struck the half-hours with a stone broom. In another an iron donkey kicked the hours on a bell behind him. It would be impossible to tell all the odd ways in which the clocks of Rondaine struck. But in one respect they were alike; they all did strike. The good people of the town would not have tolerated a clock which did not strike.

It was very interesting to lie awake in the night and hear the clocks of Rondaine strike. First would come a faint striking from one of the churches in the by-streets—a modest sound, as if the clock was not sure whether it was too early or not; then from another quarter would be heard a more confident clock striking the hour clearly and distinctly. When

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they were quite ready, but not a moment before, the seven bells of the large church on the square would chime the hour, after which, at a respectful interval of time, the other church clocks of the town would strike. After the lapse of three or four minutes, the sound of all these bells seemed to wake up the stone man in the tower of the town building, and he struck the hour with his hammer. When this had been done, the other municipal clocks felt at liberty to strike, and they did so. And when every sound had died away, so that he would be certain to be heard if there was any one awake to hear, it would be very likely that the iron donkey would kick out the hour on his bell, though there were times when he kicked before any of the clocks began to strike. One by one the clocks on the street corners struck, the up-town ones first, and afterwards those near the river. These were followed by the two clocks on the bridge, the one at the country end waiting until it was quite sure that the one at the town end had finished. Somewhat later would be heard the clock of Vougereau, an old country house in the suburbs. This clock, a very large one, was on the top of a great square stone tower, and from its age it had acquired a habit of deliberation, so that when it began to strike people were very apt to think it was one o'clock, until, after a considerable interval, another stroke would assure them that it was later or earlier than that, and if they really wanted to know what hour the old clock was striking they must give themselves time enough to listen until they were entirely certain it had finished.

The very last clock to strike in Rondaine was one belong-

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ing to a little old lady with white hair, who lived in a little white house in one of the prettiest and cleanest streets in the town. Her clock was in a little white tower at the corner of her house, and was the only strictly private clock which was in the habit of making itself publicly heard. Long after every other clock had struck, and when there was every reason to believe that for a considerable time nothing but half-hours would be heard in Rondaine, the old lady's clock would strike quickly and decisively, and with a confident tone, as if it knew it was right, and wished everybody to know that it knew.

In an unpretentious house which stood on a corner of two of the smaller streets in the town lived a young girl named Arla. For a year or more Arla had been in the habit of waking up very early in the morning, sometimes long before daylight, and it had become a habit with her to lie and listen to the clocks. Her room was at the top of the house, and one of its windows opened to the west and another to the south, so that sounds entered from different quarters. Arla liked to leave these windows open so that the sounds of the clocks might come in.

Arla knew every clock by its tone, and she always made it a point to lie awake until she was positively sure that the last stroke of the clock at Vougereau had sounded. But it often happened that sleep overcame her before she heard the clock of the little old lady with white hair. It was so very long to wait for that!

It was not because she wanted to know the hour that Arla used to lie and listen to the clocks. She had a little

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clock of her own, which stood in her room, and on which she depended for correct information regarding the time of day or night. This clock, which had been given to her when she was a small girl, not only struck the hours and half-hours and quarter-hours, but there was attached to it a very pretty piece of mechanism which also indicated the time. On the front of the clock, just below the dial, was a sprig of a rose-bush beautifully made of metal, and on this, just after the hour had sounded, there was a large green bud. At a quarter past the hour this bud opened a little, so that the red petals could be seen. Fifteen minutes later it was a half-blown rose, and at a quarter of an hour more it was nearly full blown. Just before the hour the rose opened to its fullest extent, and so remained until the clock had finished striking, when it immediately shut up into a great green bud. This clock was a great delight to Arla, for not only was it a very pleasant thing to watch the unfolding of the rose, but it was a continual satisfaction to her to think that her little clock always told her exactly what time it was, no matter what the other clocks of Rondaine might say.

Arla's father and mother were thrifty, industrious people, who were very fond of their daughter. They not only taught her how to employ herself usefully, but insisted that she should take the recreation and exercise that a young girl ought to have. All day she was so occupied with work or play that she had little opportunity of thinking for herself. But even if they had considered the matter, this fact would not have troubled her parents, as they looked upon Arla as entirely too young for that sort of thing. In the very early morning,

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however, listening to the clocks of Rondaine or waiting for them, Arla did a great deal of thinking. And it so happened on the morning of the day before Christmas, when the stars were bright and the air frosty, and every outside sound very clear and distinct, that Arla began to think of something which had never entered her mind before.

“How in the world,” she said to herself, “do the people of Rondaine know when it is really Christmas? Christmas begins as soon as it is twelve o’clock on Christmas eve, but as some of the people depend for the time upon one clock and some upon others, a great many of them cannot truly know when Christmas day has really begun. Even some of the church clocks make people think that Christmas has come when, in reality, it is yet the day before. Not one of them strikes at the right time! As for that iron donkey, I believe he kicks whenever he feels like it. And yet there are people who go by him! I know this, for they have told me so. But the little old lady with white hair is worse off than anybody else. Christmas must always come ever so long before she knows it.”

With these important thoughts on her mind, Arla could not go to sleep again. She heard all the clocks strike, and lay awake until her own little clock told her that she ought to get up. During this time she had made up her mind what she should do. There was yet one day before Christmas, and if the people of the town could be made to see in what a deplorable condition they were on account of the difference in their clocks, they might have time to rectify the matter so that all the clocks should strike the correct hour, and everybody should know exactly when Christmas day began. She was sure the citizens

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had never given this matter proper consideration, and it was quite natural that such should be the case, for it was not every one who was in the habit of lying awake in the very early morning ; and in the daytime, with all the outdoor noises, one could not hear all the clocks strike in Rondaine. Arla, therefore, thought that a great deal depended upon her, for she knew exactly how this matter stood.

When she went down to breakfast she asked permission of her mother to take a day's holiday. As she was a good girl, and never neglected either her lessons or her tasks, her mother was quite willing to give her the day before Christmas in which she could do as she pleased, and she did not think it necessary to ask if she intended to spend it in any particular way.

The day was cool, but the sun shone brightly and the air was pleasant. In the country round about Rondaine Christmas-time was not a very cold season. Arla put on a warm jacket and a pretty blue hood, and started out gayly to attend to the business in hand. Everybody in Rondaine knew her father and mother, and a great many of them knew her, so there was no reason why she should be afraid to go where she chose. In one hand she carried a small covered basket in which she had placed her rose-clock. The works of this little clock were moved and regulated like those of a watch, and therefore it could be carried about without stopping it.

The first place she visited was the church at which she and her parents always attended service. It was a small building in a little square at the bottom of a hill, and to reach it one had to go down a long flight of stone steps. When she entered

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the dimly lighted church, Arla soon saw the sacristan, a pleasant-faced little old man whom she knew very well.

“Good morning, sir,” said she. “Do you take care of the church clock?”

The sacristan was sweeping the stone pavement of the church, just inside the door. He stopped and leaned upon his broom. “Yes, my little friend,” he said, “I take care of everything here except the souls of the people.”

“Well, then,” said Arla, “I think you ought to know that your clock is eleven minutes too fast. I came here to tell you that, so that you might change it, and make it strike properly.”

The sacristan’s eyes began to twinkle. He was a man of merry mood. “That is very good of you, little Arla — very good indeed. And now that we are about it, is n’t there something else you would like to change? What do you say to having these stone pillars put to one side, so that they may be out of the way of the people when they come in? Or those great beams in the roof? They might be turned over, and perhaps we might find that the upper side would look fresher than this lower part, which is somewhat time-stained, as you see. Or, for the matter of that, what do you say to having our clock-tower taken down and set out there in the square before the church door? Then short-sighted people could see the time much better, don’t you think? Now tell me, shall we do all these things together, wise little friend?”

A tear or two came into Arla’s eyes, but she made no answer.

“Good morning, sir,” she said, and went away.

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“I suppose,” she said to herself, as she ran up the stone steps, “that he thought it would be too much trouble to climb to the top of the tower to set the clock right. But that was no reason why he should make fun of me. I don’t like him as much as I used to.”

The next church to which Arla went was a large one, and it was some time before she could find the sacristan. At last she saw him in a side chapel at the upper end of the church, engaged in dusting some old books. He was a large man with a red face, and he turned around quickly, with a stern expression, as she entered.

“Please, sir,” said Arla, “I came to tell you that your church clock is wrong. It strikes from four to six minutes before it ought to, sometimes the one, and sometimes the other. It should be changed so that it will be sure to strike at the right time.”

The face of the sacristan grew redder and twitched visibly at her remark.

“Do you know what I wish?” he almost shouted in reply.

“No, sir,” answered Arla.

“I wish,” he said, “that you were a boy, so that I might take you by the collar and soundly cuff your ears, for coming here to insult an officer of the church in the midst of his duties! But, as you are a girl, I can only tell you to go away from here as rapidly and as quietly as you can, or I shall have to put you in the hands of the ecclesiastical authorities!”

Arla was truly frightened, and although she did not run,—

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for she knew that would not be proper in a church,— she walked as fast as she could into the outer air.

“ What a bad man,” she then said to herself, “ to be employed in a church ! It surely is not known what sort of person he is, or he would not be allowed to stay there a day !”

Arla thought she would not go to any more churches at present, for she did not know what sort of sacristans she might find in them.

“ When the other clocks in the town all strike properly,” she thought, “ it is most likely they will know for themselves that their clocks are wrong, and they will have them changed.”

She now made her way to the great square of the town, and entered the building at the top of which stood the stone man with his hammer. She found the concierge, or door-keeper, in a little room by the side of the entrance. She knew where to go, for she had been there with her mother to ask permission to go up and see the stone man strike the hour with his hammer, and the stone woman strike the half-hour with her broom.

The concierge was a grave, middle-aged man with spectacles, and, remembering what had just happened, Arla thought she would be careful how she spoke to him.

“ If you please, sir,” she said, with a courtesy, “ I should like to say something to you, and I hope you will not be offended when I tell you that your clock is not quite right. Your stone man and your stone woman are both too slow. They sometimes strike as much as seven minutes after they ought to strike.”

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The grave, middle-aged man looked steadily at her through his spectacles.

"I thought," continued Arla, "that if this should be made known to you, you would have the works of the stone man and the stone woman altered so that they might strike at the right time. They can be heard so far, you know, that it is very necessary they should not make mistakes."

"Child," said the man, with his spectacles still steadily fixed on her, "for one hundred and fifty-seven years the open tower on this building has stood here. For one hundred and fifty-seven years the thunder and the lightning in time of storm have roared and flashed around it, and the sun in time of fair weather has shone upon it. In that century and a half and seven years, men and women have lived and have died, and their children and their grandchildren and their great-grandchildren, and even the children of these, have lived and died after them. Kings and queens have passed away, one after another, and all things living have grown old and died, one generation after another, many times. Yet, through all these years, that stone man and that stone woman have stood up there, and in storm and in fair weather, by daylight or in the darkness of night, they have struck the hours and the half-hours. Of all things which, one hundred and fifty-seven years ago, were able to lift an arm to strike, they alone are left. And now you, a child of thirteen or perhaps fourteen years, come to me and ask me to change that which has not been changed for a century and a half and seven years!"

Arla could answer nothing with those spectacles fixed upon her. They seemed to glare more and more as she

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looked at them. "Good morning, sir," she said, dropping a courtesy as she moved backward toward the door. Reaching it, she turned and hurried into the street.

"If those stone people," she thought, "have not been altered in all these years, it is likely they would now be striking two or three hours out of the way! But I don't know. If they kept on going slow for more than a century, they must have come around to the right hour sometimes. But they will have to strike ever and ever so much longer before they come around there again!"

Arla now walked on until she came to a street corner where a cobbler had a little shop. In the angle of the wall of the house, at the height of the second story, was a clock. This cobbler did not like the confined air and poor light of his shop, and whenever the weather allowed he always worked outside on the sidewalk. To-day, although it was winter, the sun shone brightly on this side of the street, and he had put his bench outside, close to his door, and was sitting there, hard at work. When Arla stopped before him he looked up and said cheerfully:

"Good morning, Mistress Arla. Do you want them half-soled, or heeled or a patch put on the toes?"

"My shoes do not need mending," said Arla. "I came to ask you if you could tell me who has charge of the clock at this corner."

"I can easily do that," he said, "for I am the man. I am paid by the year, for winding it up and keeping it in order, as much as I should get for putting the soles, heels, tops, linings, and buckles on a pair of shoes."

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“Which means making them out and out,” said Arla.

“You are right,” said he, “and the pay is not great. But if it were larger, more people might want it and I might lose it; and if it were less, how could I afford to do it at all? So I am satisfied.”

“But you ought not to be entirely satisfied,” said Arla, “for the clock does not keep good time. I know when it is striking, for it has a very jangling sound, and it is the most irregular clock in Rondaine. Sometimes it strikes as much as twenty-five minutes after the hour, and very often it does not strike at all.”

The cobbler looked up at her with a smile. “I am sorry,” he said, “that it has a jangling stroke, but the fashioning of clocks is not my trade, and I could not mend its sound with awl, hammer, or waxed end. But it seems to me, my good maiden, that you never mended a pair of shoes.”

“No, indeed!” said Arla. “I should do that even worse than you would make clocks.”

“Never having mended shoes, then,” said the cobbler, “you do not know what a grievous thing it is to have twelve o’clock, or six o’clock, or any other hour, in fact, come before you are ready for it. Now, I don’t mind telling you, because I know you are too good to spoil the trade of a hard-working cobbler,—and shoemaker, too, whenever he gets the chance to be one,—that when I have promised a customer that he shall have his shoes or his boots at a certain time of day, and that time is drawing near, while the end of the job is still somewhat distant, then do I skip up the stairway and set back the hands of the clock according to the work that

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has to be done. Then when my customer comes I look up to the clock-face and I say to him, 'Glad to see you !' and then he will look up at the clock and will say, 'Yes, I am a little too soon.' And then, as likely as not, he will sit down on the door-step here by me and talk entertainingly ; and it may happen that he will sit there without grumbling for many minutes after the clock has pointed out the hour at which the shoes were promised. Sometimes, when I have been much belated in beginning a job, I stop the clock altogether, for you can well see for yourself that it would not do to have it strike eleven when it is truly twelve. So, if my man be willing to sit down, and our talk be very entertaining, the clock being above him where he cannot see it without stepping outward from the house, he may not notice that it is stopped. This expedient once served me very well, for an old gentleman, over-testy and over-punctual, once came to me for his shoes, and looking up at the clock, which I had prepared for him, exclaimed, 'Bless me ! I am much too early !' So he sat down by me for three-quarters of an hour, in which time I persuaded him that his shoes were far too much worn to be worth mending any more, and that he should have a new pair, which, afterwards, I made."

"I do not believe it is right for you to do that," said Arla. "But even if you think so, there is no reason why your clock should go wrong at night, when so many people can hear it because of the stillness."

"Ah me !" said the cobbler, "I do not object to the clock being as right as you please in the night, but when my day's work is done, I so desire to go home to my supper that I

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often forget to put the clock right, or to set it going if it is stopped. But so many things stop at night—such as the day itself—and so many things then go wrong—such as the ways of evil-minded people—that I think you truly ought to pardon my poor clock."

"Then you will not consent," said Arla, "to make it go right?"

"I will do that with all cheerfulness," answered the cobbler, pulling out a pair of waxed ends with a great jerk, "as soon as I can make myself go right. The most important thing should always be done first. Surely I am more important than a clock!" And he smiled with great good humor.

Arla knew that it would be of no use to stand there any longer and talk with this cobbler. Turning to go, she said :

"When I bring you shoes to mend, you shall finish them by my clock, and not by yours."

"That will I, my good little Arla," said the cobbler, heartily. "They shall be finished by any clock in town, and five minutes before the hour or no payment."

Arla now walked on until she came to the bridge over the river. It was a long, covered structure, and by the entrance sat the bridge-keeper.

"Do you know, sir," said she, "that the clock at this end of your bridge does not keep the same time as the one at the other end? They are not so very different, but I have noticed that this one is always done striking at least two minutes before the other begins."

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The bridge-keeper looked at her with one eye, which was all he had.

“You are as wrong as anybody can be,” said he. “I do not say anything about the striking, because my ears are not now good enough to hear the clock at the other end when I am near this one, but I know they both keep the same time. I have often looked at this clock, and have then walked to the other end of the bridge, and have found that the clock there was exactly like it.”

Arla looked at the poor old man, whose legs were warmly swaddled on account of his rheumatism, and said :

“But it must take you a good while to walk to the other end of the bridge.”

“Out upon you!” cried the bridge-keeper. “I am not so old as that yet! I can walk there in no time!”

Arla now crossed the bridge and went a short distance along a country road until she came to the great stone house known as Vougereau. This belonged to a rich family who seldom came there, and the place was in charge of an elderly man who was the brother of Arla’s mother. When his niece was shown into a room on the ground floor which served for his parlor and his office, he was very glad to see her, and while Arla was having something to eat and drink after her walk, the two had a pleasant chat.

“I came this time, Uncle Anton,” she said, “not only to see you, but to tell you that the great clock in your tower does not keep good time.”

Uncle Anton looked at her a little surprised.

“How do you know that, my dear?” he said.

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striking, and then I look at my own rose-clock to see what time it really is."

"Your rose-clock?" said the superintendent.

"This is it," said Arla, opening her basket and taking out her little clock.

The superintendent took it into his hands and looked at it attentively, both outside and inside. Then, still holding it, he stepped out into the courtyard. When, in a few moments, he returned, he said :

"I have compared your clock with my sun-dial, and find that it is ten minutes slow. I see also that like the donkey-clock its works are not adjusted in such a way as to be unaffected by heat and cold."

"My — clock — ten — minutes — slow!" exclaimed Arla, with wide-open eyes.

"Yes," said the superintendent, "that is the case to-day, and on some days it is, probably, a great deal too fast. Such a clock as this—which is a very ingenious and beautiful one—ought frequently to be compared with a sun-dial or other correct time-keeper, and set to the proper hour. I see it requires a peculiar key with which to set it. Have you brought this with you?"

"No, sir," said Arla. "I did not suppose it would be needed."

"Well, then," said the superintendent, "you can set it forward ten minutes when you reach home. And to-morrow morning if you compare the other clocks with it, I think you will find that not all of them are wrong."

Arla sat quiet for a moment, and then she said : "I think

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thinking about it, she slowly returned to the town. As she approached the house of the little old lady with white hair, she concluded to stop and speak to her about her clock.

"She will surely be willing to alter that," said Arla, "for it is so very much out of the way."

The old lady knew who Arla was and received her very kindly. But when she heard why the young girl had come to her, she flew into a passion.

"Never, since I was born," she said, "have I been spoken to like this! My great-grandfather lived in this house before me; that clock was good enough for him. My grandfather lived in this house before me; that clock was good enough for him. My father and mother lived in this house before me; that clock was good enough for them. I was born in this house, have always lived in it, and expect to die in it; that clock is good enough for me. I heard its strokes when I was but a little child; I hope to hear them at my last hour. And sooner than raise my hand against the clock of my ancestors, and the clock of my whole life, I would cut off that hand!"

Some tears came into Arla's eyes. She was a little frightened. "I hope you will pardon me, good madam," she said, "for, truly, I did not wish to offend you. Nor did I think that your clock is not a good one. I only meant that you should make it better. It is nearly an hour out of the way."

The sight of Arla's tears cooled the anger of the little old lady with white hair. "Child," she said, "you do not know what you are talking about, and I forgive you. But remember this: never ask persons as old as I am to alter the principles which have always made clear to them what they should do,

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or the clocks which have always told them when they should do it."

Then, kissing Arla, she bade her good-by.

"Principles may last a great while without altering," thought Arla, as she went away, "but I am sure it is very different with clocks."

The poor girl now felt a good deal discouraged.

"People don't seem to care whether their clocks are right or not," she said to herself, "and if they don't care, I am sure it is of no use for me to tell them about it. If even one clock could be made to go properly, it might help to make the people of Rondaine care to know exactly what time it is. Now, there is that iron donkey. If he would but kick at the right hour it would be an excellent thing, for he kicks so hard that he is heard all over the town."

Determined to make this one more effort, Arla walked quickly to the town building at the top of which was the clock with the iron donkey. This building was a sort of museum. It had a great many curious things in it, and it was in charge of a very ingenious man, who was learned and skilful in various ways.

When Arla had informed the superintendent of the museum why she had come to him, he did not laugh at her, nor did he get angry. He was accustomed to giving earnest consideration to matters of this sort, and he listened attentively to all that Arla had to say.

"You must know," he said, "that our iron donkey is a very complicated piece of mechanism. Not only must he kick out the hours, but five minutes before doing so he must turn his

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head around and look at the bell behind him, and then, when he has done kicking, he must put his head back into its former position. All this action requires a great many wheels and cogs and springs and levers, and these cannot be made to move with absolute regularity. When it is cold some of his works contract, and when it is warm they expand. There are also other reasons why he is very likely to lose or gain time. At noon on every bright day I set him right, being able to get the correct time from a sun-dial which stands in the courtyard. But his works—which, I am sorry to say, are not well made—are sure to get a great deal out of the way before I set him again."

"Then, if there are several cloudy or rainy days together, he goes very wrong indeed," said Arla.

"Yes, he truly does," replied the superintendent, "and I am sorry for it. But there is no way to remedy his irregularities except for me to make him all over again at my own expense, and that is something I cannot afford to do. The clock belongs to the town, and I am sure the citizens will not be willing to spend the money necessary for a new donkey-clock. For, so far as I know, every person but yourself is perfectly satisfied with this one."

"I suppose so," said Arla, with a sigh. "But it really is a great pity that every striking clock in Rondaine should be wrong!"

"But how do you know they are all wrong?" asked the superintendent.

"Oh, that is easy enough," said Arla. "When I lie awake in the early morning, when all else is very still, I listen to their

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striking, and then I look at my own rose-clock to see what time it really is."

"Your rose-clock?" said the superintendent.

"This is it," said Arla, opening her basket and taking out her little clock.

The superintendent took it into his hands and looked at it attentively, both outside and inside. Then, still holding it, he stepped out into the courtyard. When, in a few moments, he returned, he said :

"I have compared your clock with my sun-dial, and find that it is ten minutes slow. I see also that like the donkey-clock its works are not adjusted in such a way as to be unaffected by heat and cold."

"My — clock — ten — minutes — slow!" exclaimed Arla, with wide-open eyes.

"Yes," said the superintendent, "that is the case to-day, and on some days it is, probably, a great deal too fast. Such a clock as this—which is a very ingenious and beautiful one—ought frequently to be compared with a sun-dial or other correct time-keeper, and set to the proper hour. I see it requires a peculiar key with which to set it. Have you brought this with you?"

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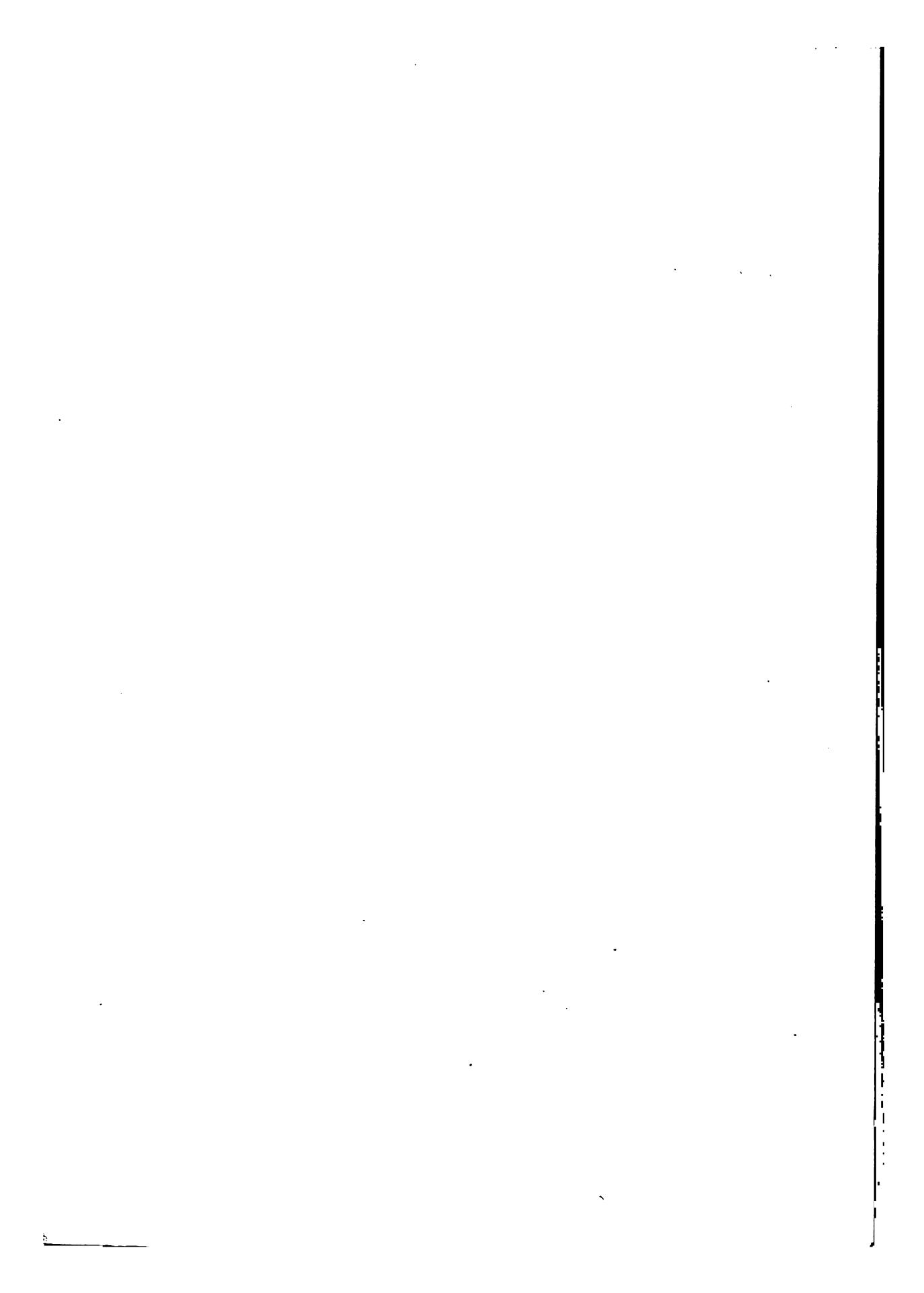
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Arla sat quiet for a moment, and then she said: "I think

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and looked at it attentively.*



F. Ricci - Edizioni



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I shall not care any more to compare the clocks of Rondaine with my little rose-clock. If the people are satisfied with their own clocks, whether they are fast or slow, and do not desire to know exactly when Christmas day begins, I can do nobody any good by listening to the different strikings and then looking at my own little clock with a night-lamp by it."

"Especially," said the superintendent, with a smile, "when you are not sure that your rose-clock is right. But if you will bring here your little clock and your key on any day when the sun is shining, I will set it to the time shadowed on the sun-dial, or show you how to do it yourself."

"Thank you very much," said Arla, and she took her leave.

As she walked home, she lifted the lid of her basket and looked at her little rose-clock. "To think of it!" she said. "That you should be sometimes too fast and sometimes too slow! And, worse than that, to think that some of the other clocks have been right and you have been wrong! But I do not feel like altering you to-day. If you go fast sometimes, and slow sometimes, you must be right sometimes, and one of these days, when I take you to be compared with the sun-dial, perhaps you may not have to be altered so much."

Arla went to bed that night quite tired with her long walks, and when she awoke it was broad daylight.

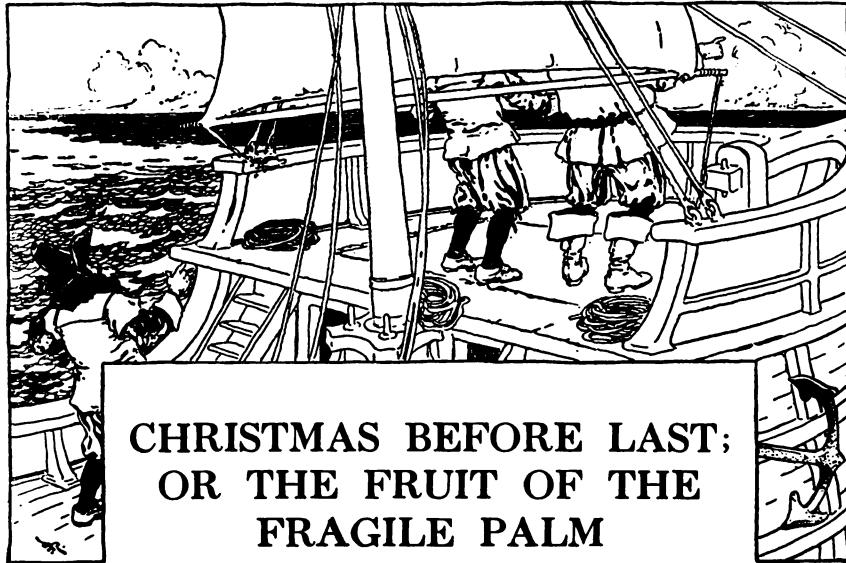
"I do not know," she said to herself, "exactly when Christmas began, but I am very sure that the happy day is here."

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“Do you lie awake in the morning as much as you used to?” asked Arla’s mother, a few weeks after the Christmas holidays.

“No, mother dear,” said Arla. “I now sleep with one of my windows shut, and I am no longer awakened by that chilly feeling which used to come to me in the early morning, when I would draw the bed-covers close about me and think how wrong were the clocks of Rondaine.”

The little rose-clock never went to be compared with the sun-dial. “Perhaps you are right now,” Arla would say to her clock each day when the sun shone, “and I will not take you until some time when I feel very sure that you are wrong.”



CHRISTMAS BEFORE LAST; OR THE FRUIT OF THE FRAGILE PALM

THE *Horn o' Plenty* was a fine, big, old-fashioned ship, very high in the bow, very high in the stern, with a quarter-deck always carpeted in fine weather, because her captain could not see why one should not make himself comfortable at sea as well as on land. Covajos Maroots was her captain, and a fine, jolly, old-fashioned, elderly sailor he was. The *Horn o' Plenty* always sailed upon one sea, and always between two ports, one on the west side of the sea, and one on the east. The port on the west was quite a large city, in which Captain Covajos had a married son, and the port on the east was another city in which he had a married daughter. In each family he had several grandchildren, and, consequently, it was a great joy to the jolly old sailor to arrive at either port. The captain was very particular about his cargo, and the *Horn o' Plenty* was generally laden with good things to eat, or sweet things to smell, or fine things

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to wear, or beautiful things to look at. Once a merchant brought to him some boxes of bitter aloes and mustard-plasters, but Captain Covajos refused to take them into his ship.

“I know,” said he, “that such things are very useful and necessary at times, but you would better send them over in some other vessel. The *Horn o’ Plenty* has never carried anything that, to look at, to taste, or to smell, did not delight the souls of old and young. I am sure you cannot say that of these commodities. If I were to put up such things on board my ship, it would break the spell which more than fifty savory voyages have thrown around it.”

There were sailors who sailed upon that sea who used to say that sometimes, when the weather was hazy and they could not see far, they would know they were about to meet the *Horn o’ Plenty* before she came in sight. Her planks and timbers, and even her sails and masts, had gradually become so filled with the odor of good things that the winds that blew over her were filled with an agreeable fragrance.

There was another thing about which Captain Covajos was very particular: he always liked to arrive at one of his ports a few days before Christmas. Never, in the course of his long life, had the old sailor spent a Christmas at sea, and now that he had his grandchildren to help make the holidays merry, it would have grieved him very much if he had been unable to reach one or the other of his ports in good season. His jolly old vessel was generally heavily laden and very slow, and there were many days of calm on that sea when she did not sail at all, so that her voyages were usually very, very long. But the captain fixed the days of sailing so as to give

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himself plenty of time to get to the other end of his course before Christmas came around.

One spring, however, he started too late, and when he was about at the middle of his voyage, he called to him Baragat Bean, his old boatswain. This venerable sailor had been with the captain ever since he had commanded the *Horn o' Plenty*, and on important occasions he was always consulted in preference to the other officers, none of whom had served under Captain Covajos more than fifteen or twenty years.

"Baragat," said the captain, "we have just passed the Isle of Guinea-hens. You can see its one mountain standing up against the sky to the north."

"Ay, ay, sir," said old Baragat. "There she stands, the same as usual."

"That makes it plain," said the captain, "that we are not yet half-way across, and I am very much afraid that I shall not be able to reach my dear daughter's house before Christmas."

"That would be doleful, indeed," said Baragat, "but I've feared something of the kind, for we've had calms nearly every other day, and sometimes, when the wind did blow, it came from the wrong direction, and it's my belief that the ship sailed backward."

"That was very bad management," said the captain. "The chief mate should have seen to it that the sails were turned in such a manner that the ship could not go backward. If that sort of thing happened often, it would become quite a serious affair."

"But what is done can't be helped," said the boatswain,

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“and I don’t see how you are going to get into port before Christmas.”

“Nor do I,” said the captain, gazing out over the sea.

“It would give me a sad turn, sir,” said Baragat, “to see you spend Christmas at sea, a thing you never did before, nor ever shall do, if I can help it. If you’ll take my advice, sir, you’ll turn around and go back. It’s a shorter distance to the port we started from than to the one we are going to, and if we turn back now, I am sure we all shall be on shore before the holidays.”

“Go back to my son’s house!” exclaimed Captain Covajos, “where I was last winter! Why, that would be like spending last Christmas over again!”

“But that would be better than having none at all, sir,” said the boatswain, “and a Christmas at sea would be about equal to none.”

“Good!” exclaimed the captain. “I will give up the coming Christmas with my daughter and her children, and go back and spend last Christmas over again with my son and his dear boys and girls. Have the ship turned around immediately, Baragat, and tell the chief mate I do not wish to sail backward if it can possibly be avoided.”

For a week or more the *Horn o’ Plenty* sailed back upon her track toward the city where dwelt the captain’s son. The weather was fine, the carpet was never taken up from the quarter-deck, and everything was going on very well, when a man, who happened to have an errand at one of the top-masts, came down and reported that he had seen, far away to the north, a little open boat with some people in it.

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“Ah me!” said Captain Covajos, “it must be some poor fellows who are shipwrecked. It will take us out of our course, but we must not leave them to their fate. Have the ship turned about, so that it will sail northward.”

It was not very long before they came up with the boat, and, much to the captain’s surprise, he saw that it was filled with boys.

“Who are you?” he cried as soon as he was near enough. “And where do you come from?”

“We are the First Class in Long Division,” said the oldest boy, “and we are cast away. Have you anything to eat that you can spare us? We are almost famished.”

“We have plenty of everything,” said the captain. “Come on board instantly, and all your wants shall be supplied.”

“How long have you been without food?” he asked, when the boys were on the deck of the vessel.

“We have had nothing to eat since breakfast,” said one of them, “and it is now late in the afternoon. Some of us are nearly dead from starvation.”

“It is very hard for boys to go so long without eating,” said the good captain, and leading them below, he soon set them to work upon a bountiful meal.

Not until their hunger was fully satisfied did he ask them how they came to be cast away.

“You see, sir,” said the oldest boy, “we and the Multiplication Class had a holiday to-day, and each class took a boat and determined to have a race, so as to settle, once for all, which was the highest branch of arithmetic—multiplication

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or long division. Our class rowed so hard that we entirely lost sight of the Multiplicationers, and found, indeed, that we were out of sight of everything, so that, at last, we did not know which was the way back, and thus we became castaways."

"Where is your school?" asked the captain.

"It is on Apple Island," said the boy. "And although it is a long way off for a small boat with only four oars for nine boys, it can't be very far for a ship."

"That is quite likely," said the captain, "and we shall take you home. Baragat, tell the chief mate to have the vessel turned toward Apple Island, that we may restore these boys to their parents and guardians."

Now, the chief mate had not the least idea in the world where Apple Island was, but he did not like to ask, because that would be confessing his ignorance. So he steered his vessel toward a point where he believed he had once seen an island, which, probably was the one in question. The *Horn o' Plenty* sailed in this direction all night, and when day broke, and there was no island in sight, she took another course, and so sailed this way and that for six or seven days, without ever seeing a sign of land. All this time, the First Class in Long Division was as happy as it could be, for it was having a perfect holiday, fishing off the sides of the vessel, climbing up the ladders and ropes, and helping the sailors whistle for wind. But the captain now began to grow a little impatient, for he felt he was losing time; so he sent for the chief mate, and said to him mildly but firmly:

"I know it is out of the line of your duty to search for

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island schools, but if you really think that you do not know where Apple Island lies, I wish you to say so, frankly and openly."

"Frankly and openly," answered the mate, "I don't think I do."

"Very well," said the captain. "Now, that is a basis to work upon, and we know where we stand. You can take a little rest, and let the second mate find the island. But I can only give him three days in which to do it. We really have no time to spare."

The second mate was very proud of the responsibility placed upon him, and immediately ordered the vessel to be steered due south.

"One is just as likely," he said, "to find a totally unknown place by going straight ahead in a certain direction as by sailing here, there, and everywhere. In this way you really get over more water, and there is less wear and tear on the ship and rigging."

So he sailed due south for two days, and at the end of that time they came in sight of land. This was a large island, and when they approached near enough, they saw upon its shores a very handsome city.

"Is this Apple Island?" said Captain Covajos to the oldest boy.

"Well, sir," answered the youth, "I am not sure I can say with certainty that I truly believe it is. But I think, if we were to go on shore, the people there would be able to tell us how to go to Apple Island."

"Very likely," said the good captain. "We will go on

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shore and make inquiries. And it has struck me, Baragat," he said, "that perhaps the merchants in the city where my son lives may be somewhat annoyed when the *Horn o' Plenty* comes back with all their goods on board, and not disposed of. Not understanding my motives, they may be disposed to think ill of me. Consequently, the idea has come into my head that it might be a good thing to stop here for a time, and to try to dispose of some of our merchandise. The city seems to be prosperous, and I have no doubt there are a number of merchants here."

So the *Horn o' Plenty* was soon anchored in the harbor, and as many of the officers and crew as could be spared went on shore to make inquiries. Of course the First Class in Long Division was not left behind, and, indeed, they were ashore as soon as anybody.

The captain and his companions were cordially welcomed by some of the dignitaries of the city who had come down to the harbor to see the strange vessel, but no one could give any information in regard to Apple Island, the name of which had never been heard on those shores. The captain was naturally desirous of knowing at what place he had landed, and was informed that this was the Island of the Fragile Palm.

"That is rather an odd name," said the old captain.
"Why is it so called?"

"The reason is this," said his informant: "Near the centre of the island stands a tall and very slender palm tree, which has been growing there for hundreds of years. It bears large and handsome fruit which is something like the cocoanut, and in its perfection, is said to be a transcendently delicious fruit."

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"Said to be!" exclaimed the captain. "Are you not positive about it?"

"No," said the other. "No one living has ever tasted the fruit in its perfection. When it becomes over-ripe it drops to the ground, and even then it is considered royal property, and is taken to the palace for the king's table. But on fête-days and grand occasions small bits of it are distributed to the populace."

"Why don't you pick the fruit," asked Captain Covajos, "when it is in its best condition to eat?"

"It would be impossible," said the citizen, "for any one to climb up that tree, the trunk of which is so extremely delicate and fragile that the weight of a man would probably snap it, and, of course, a ladder placed against it would produce the same result. Many attempts have been made to secure this fruit at the proper season, but all of them have failed. Another palm tree of a more robust sort was once planted near this one, in hope that when it grew high enough men could climb up the stronger tree and get the fruit from the other. But although we waited many years, the second tree never attained sufficient height, and it was cut down."

"It is a great pity," said the captain, "but I suppose it cannot be helped." Then he began to make inquiries about the merchants in the place, and what probability there was of his doing a little trade here. The captain soon discovered that the cargo of his ship was made up of goods which were greatly desired by the citizens of this place, and for several days he was very busy selling the good

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greater rapidity, although the boys held it back with all their strength, and, in spite of their most desperate efforts, the top came to the ground at last with a great thump. Then they all dropped their ropes and ran for the fruit. Fortunately the great nuts encased in their strong husks were not in the least injured, and the boys soon pulled them off, about forty in all. Some of the boys were in favor of cracking open a few of the nuts and eating them, but this the eldest boy positively forbade.

“This fruit,” he said, “is looked upon as almost sacred, and if we were to eat any of it, it is probable that we should be put to death, which would be extremely awkward for fellows who have gone to all the trouble we have had. We must set up the tree and carry the fruit to the king.”

According to this advice, they thoroughly greased the hinge in the tree with the butter, and then set themselves to work to haul up the trunk. This, however, was much more difficult than letting it down; and they had to lift up the head of it, and prop it up on poles, before they could pull upon it with advantage. The tree, although tall, was indeed a very slender one, with a small top, and if it had been as fragile as it was supposed to be, the boys’ efforts would surely have broken it. At last, after much tugging and warm work, they pulled it into an upright position, and put in the second bolt. They left the ropes on the tree because, as some of them had suggested, the people might want to let the tree down again the next year. It would have been difficult for the boys to carry in their arms the great pile of fruit they had gathered, but having noticed a basket-maker’s cottage on their way to the tree, two of

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and I don't know how many grandfathers back, have offered large rewards to any one who would procure them this fruit in its best condition. But nobody has ever been able to get any yet."

"The reward still holds good, I suppose?" said the head boy.

"Oh, yes," answered the guide. "There never was a king who so much desired to taste the fruit as our present monarch."

The oldest boy looked up at the top of the tree, shut one eye, and gave his head a little wag. Whereupon every boy in the class looked up, shut one eye, and slightly wagged his head. After which the oldest boy said that he thought it was about time for them to go back to the ship.

As soon as they reached the vessel, and could talk freely together, the boys had an animated discussion. It was unanimously agreed that they would make an attempt to get some of the precious fruit from the Fragile Palm, and the only difference of opinion among them was as to how it should be done. Most of them were in favor of some method of climbing the tree and trusting to its not breaking. But this the oldest boy would not listen to. The trunk might snap, and then somebody would be hurt, and he felt, in a measure, responsible for the rest of the class. At length a good plan was proposed by a boy who had studied mechanics.

"What we ought to do with that tree," said he, "is to put a hinge into her. Then we could let her down gently, pick off the fruit, and set her up again."

"But how are you going to do it?" asked the others.

"This is the way," said the boy who had studied mechanics.

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“ You take a saw, and then, about two feet from the ground, you begin and saw down diagonally, for a foot and a half, to the centre of the trunk. Then you go on the other side, and saw down in the same way, the two cuts meeting each other. Now you have the upper part of the trunk ending in a wedge, which fits into a cleft in the lower part of the trunk. Then, about nine inches below the place where you first began to saw, you bore a hole straight through both sides of the cleft and the wedge between them. Then you put an iron bolt through this hole, and you have your tree on a hinge, only she won’t be apt to move, because she fits in so snug and tight. Then you get a long rope, and tie one end in a slip-knot loosely around the trunk. Then you get a lot of poles, and fasten them end to end, and push this slip-knot up until it is somewhere near the top, when you pull it tight. Then you take another rope with a slip-knot, and push this a little more than half-way up the trunk. By having two ropes, that way, you prevent too much strain coming on any one part of the trunk. Then, after that, you take a mallet and chisel and round off the lower corners of the wedge, so that it will turn easily in the cleft. Then we take hold of the ropes, let her down gently, pick off the fruit, and haul her up again. That will all be easy enough.”

This plan delighted the boys, and they all pronounced in its favor. But the oldest one suggested that it would be better to fasten the ropes to the trunk before they began to saw upon it, and another boy asked now they were going to keep the tree standing when they hauled her up again.

“ Oh, that is easy,” said the one who had studied me-

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chanics. "You just bore another hole about six inches above the first one, and put in another bolt. Then, of course, she can't move."

This settled all the difficulties, and it was agreed to start out early the next morning, gather the fruit, and claim the reward the king had offered. They accordingly went to the captain and asked him for a sharp saw, a mallet and chisel, an auger, two iron bolts, and two very long ropes. These, having been cheerfully given to them, were put away in readiness for the work to be attempted.

Very early on the next morning, the First Class in Long Division set out for the Fragile Palm, carrying their tools and ropes. Few people were awake as they passed through the city, and, without being observed, they reached the little plain on which the tree stood. The ropes were attached at the proper places, the tree was sawn diagonally, according to the plan, the bolt was put in, and the corners of the wedge were rounded off. Then the eldest boy produced a pound of butter, whereupon his comrades, who had seized the ropes, paused in surprise and asked him why he had brought that.

"I thought it well," was the reply, "to bring along some butter, because, when the tree is down, we can grease the hinge, and then it will not be so hard to pull it up again."

When all was ready, eight of the boys took hold of the long ropes, while another one with a pole pushed against the trunk of the Fragile Palm. When it began to lean over a little, he dropped his pole and ran to help the others with the ropes. Slowly the tree moved on its hinge, descending at first very gradually. But it soon began to move with

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greater rapidity, although the boys held it back with all their strength, and, in spite of their most desperate efforts, the top came to the ground at last with a great thump. Then they all dropped their ropes and ran for the fruit. Fortunately the great nuts encased in their strong husks were not in the least injured, and the boys soon pulled them off, about forty in all. Some of the boys were in favor of cracking open a few of the nuts and eating them, but this the eldest boy positively forbade.

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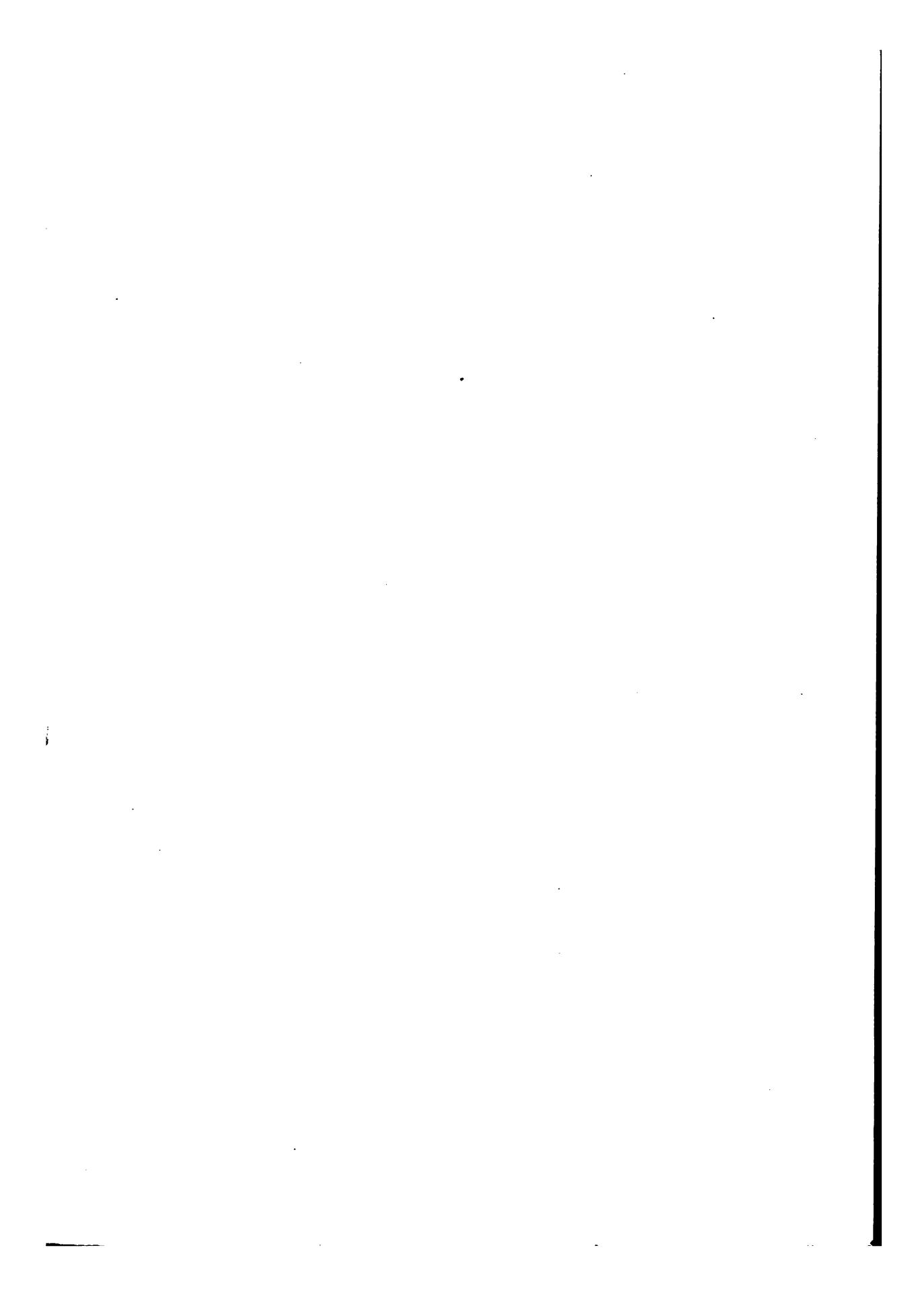
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Then they all dropped their ropes and ran for the fruit.



F. RICHARDSON



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them were sent to buy one of his largest baskets or hampers. This was attached to two long poles, and having been filled with the nuts, the boys took the poles on their shoulders, and marched into the city.

On their way to the palace they attracted a great crowd, and when they were ushered into the presence of the king, his surprise and delight knew no bounds. At first he could scarcely believe his eyes, but he had seen the fruit so often that there could be no mistake about it.

“I shall not ask you,” he said to the boys, “how you procured this fruit, and thus accomplished a deed which has been the object of the ambition of myself and my forefathers. All I ask is, did you leave the tree standing?”

“We did,” said the boys.

“Then all that remains to be done,” said his Majesty, “is to give you the reward you have so nobly earned. Treasurer, measure out to each of them a quart of gold coin. And pray be quick about it, for I am wild with desire to have a table spread, and one of these nuts cracked, that I may taste of its luscious contents.”

The boys, however, appeared a little dissatisfied. Huddling together, they consulted in a low tone, and then the eldest boy addressed the king.

“May it please your Majesty,” he said, “we should very much prefer to have you give each of us one of those nuts instead of a quart of gold.”

The king looked grave. “This is a much greater reward,” he said, “than I had ever expected to pay. But, since you ask it, you must have it. You have done something which none

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of my subjects has ever been able to accomplish, and it is right, therefore, that you should be fully satisfied."

So he gave them each a nut, with which they departed in triumph to the ship.

By the afternoon of the next day the captain had sold all his cargo at very good prices, and when the money was safely stored away in the *Horn o' Plenty*, he made ready to sail, for he declared he had really no time to spare. "I must now make all possible haste," he said to old Baragat, "to find Apple Island, put these boys ashore, and then speed away to the city where lives my son. We must not fail to get there in time to spend last Christmas over again."

On the second day after the *Horn o' Plenty* had left the Island of the Fragile Palm, one of the sailors who happened to be aloft noticed a low, black, and exceedingly unpleasant-looking vessel rapidly approaching. This soon proved to be the ship of a band of corsairs, who, having heard of the large amount of money on the *Horn o' Plenty*, had determined to pursue her and capture the rich prize. All sails were set upon the *Horn o' Plenty*, but it soon became plain that she could never outsail the corsair vessel.

"What our ship can do better than anything else," said Baragat to the captain, "is to stop short. Stop her short, and let the other one go by."

This manœuvre was executed, but although the corsair passed rapidly by, not being able to stop so suddenly, it soon turned around and came back, its decks swarming with savage men armed to the teeth.

"They are going to board us," cried Baragat. "They

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are getting out their grapping-irons, and they will fasten the two ships together."

"Let all assemble on the quarter-deck," said the captain. "It is higher there, and we shall not be so much exposed to accidents."

The corsair ship soon ran alongside the *Horn o' Plenty*, and in a moment the two vessels were fastened together, and then the corsairs, every man of them, each with cutlass in hand and a belt full of dirks and knives, swarmed up the side of the *Horn o' Plenty*, and sprang upon its central deck. Some of the ferocious fellows, seeing the officers and crew all huddled together upon the quarter-deck, made a movement in that direction. This so frightened the chief mate that he jumped down upon the deck of the corsair ship. A panic now arose, and he was immediately followed by the officers and crew. The boys, of course, were not to be left behind, and as the captain and Baragat felt themselves bound not to desert the crew, they jumped also. None of the corsairs interfered with this proceeding, for each one of them was anxious to find the money at once. When the passengers and crew of the *Horn o' Plenty* were all on board the corsair ship, Baragat came to the captain, and said :

"If I were you, sir, I'd cast off those grapnels, and separate the vessels. If we don't do that, those rascals, when they have finished robbing our money-chests, will come back here and murder us all."

"That is a good idea," said Captain Covajos. And he told the chief mate to give orders to cast off the grapnels, push the two vessels apart, and set some of the sails.

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When this had been done, the corsair vessel began to move away from the other, and was soon many lengths distant from her. When the corsairs came on deck and perceived what had happened, they were infuriated, and immediately began to pursue their own vessel with the one they had captured. But the *Horn o' Plenty* could not, by any possibility, sail as fast as the corsair ship, and the latter easily kept away from her.

“Now, then,” said Baragat to the captain, “what you have to do is easy enough. Sail straight for our port, and those sea-robbers will follow you, for, of course, they will wish to get their own vessel back again, and will hope, by some carelessness on our part, to overtake us. In the meantime the money will be safe enough, for they will have no opportunity of spending it, and when we come to port, we can take some soldiers on board, and go back and capture those fellows. They can never sail away from us on the *Horn o' Plenty*.”

“That is an admirable plan,” said the captain, “and I shall carry it out. But I cannot sail to port immediately. I must first find Apple Island and land these boys, whose parents and guardians are probably growing very uneasy. I suppose the corsairs will continue to follow us wherever we go.”

“I hope so,” said Baragat. “At any rate, we shall see.”

The First Class in Long Division was very much delighted with the change of vessels, and the boys rambled everywhere, and examined with great interest all that belonged to the corsairs. They felt quite easy about the only treasures they possessed, because, when they had first seen the piratical vessel approaching, they had taken the precious nuts which had been

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given to them by the king, and had hidden them at the bottom of some large boxes in which the captain kept the sailors' winter clothes.

“In this warm climate,” said the eldest boy, “the robbers will never meddle with those winter clothes, and our precious fruit will be perfectly safe.”

“If you had taken my advice,” said one of the other boys, “we should have eaten some of the nuts. Those, at least, we should have been sure of.”

“And we should have had that many less to show to the other classes,” said the eldest boy. “Nuts like these, I am told, if picked at the proper season, will keep for a long time.”

For some days the corsairs on board the *Horn o' Plenty* followed their own vessel, but then they seemed to despair of ever being able to overtake it, and steered in another direction. This threatened to ruin all the plans of Captain Covajos, and his mind became troubled. Then the boy who had studied mechanics came forward and said to the captain :

“I'll tell you what I'd do, sir, if I were you. I'd follow your old ship, and when night came on I'd sail up quite near to her, and let some of your sailors swim quietly over, and fasten a cable to her, and then you could tow her after you wherever you wished to go.”

“But they might unfasten the cable, or cut it,” said Baragat, who was standing by.

“That could easily be prevented,” said the boy. “At their end of the cable must be a stout chain which they cannot cut, and it must be fastened so far beneath the surface of the water that they will not be able to reach it to unfasten it.”

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“A most excellent plan,” said Captain Covajos. “Let it be carried out.”

As soon as it became quite dark, the corsair vessel quietly approached the other, and two stout sailors from Finland, who swam very well, were ordered to swim over, and attach the chain end of a long cable to the *Horn o' Plenty*. It was a very difficult operation, for the chain was heavy; but the men succeeded at last, and returned to report.

“We put the chain on fast and strong, sir,” they said to the captain, “and six feet under water. But the only place we could find to make it fast to was the bottom of the rudder.”

“That will do very well,” remarked Baragat, “for the *Horn o' Plenty* sails better backward than forward, and will not be so hard to tow.”

For week after week, and month after month, Captain Covajos, in the corsair vessel, sailed here and there in search of Apple Island, always towing after him the *Horn o' Plenty*, with the corsairs on board; but never an island with a school on it could they find, and one day old Baragat came to the captain and said:

“If I were you, sir, I'd sail no more in these warm regions. I am quite sure that apples grow in colder latitudes, and are never found so far south as this.”

“That is a good idea,” said Captain Covajos. “We should sail for the north if we wish to find an island of apples. Have the vessel turned northward.”

So, for days and weeks, the two vessels slowly moved on to the north. One day the captain made some observations and calculations, and then he hastily summoned Baragat.

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“Do you know,” said he, “that I find it is now near the end of November, and I am quite certain that we shall not get to the port where my son lives in time to celebrate last Christmas again. It is dreadfully slow work, towing after us the *Horn o' Plenty*, full of corsairs, wherever we go. But we cannot cast her off and sail straight for our port, for I should lose my good ship, the merchants would lose all their money, and the corsairs would go unpunished. Besides all that, think of the misery of the parents and guardians of those poor boys. No. I must endeavor to find Apple Island. And if I cannot reach port in time to spend last Christmas with my son, I shall certainly get there in season for Christmas before last. It is true that I spent that Christmas with my daughter, but I cannot go on to her now. I am much nearer the city where my son lives. Besides, it is necessary to go back and give the merchants their money. So now we shall have plenty of time, and need not feel hurried.”

“No,” said Baragat, heaving a vast sigh, “we need not feel hurried.”

The mind of the eldest boy now became very much troubled, and he called his companions about him. “I don’t like at all,” said he, “this sailing to the north. It is now November, and although it is warm enough at this season in the southern part of the sea, it will become colder and colder as we go on. The consequence of this will be that those corsairs will want winter clothes; they will take them out of the captain’s chests, and they will find our fruit.”

The boys groaned. “That is true,” said one of them. “But still we wish to go back to our island.”

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"Of course," said the eldest boy, "it is quite proper that we should return to Long Division. But think of the hard work we did to get that fruit, and think of the quarts of gold we gave up for it! It would be too bad to lose it now!"

It was unanimously agreed that it would be too bad to lose the fruit, and it was also unanimously agreed that they wished to go back to Apple Island. But what to do about it they did not know.

Day by day the weather grew colder and colder, and the boys became more and more excited and distressed for fear they should lose their precious fruit. The eldest boy lay awake for several nights, and then a plan came into his head. He went to Captain Covajos and proposed that he should send a flag of truce over to the corsairs, offering to exchange winter clothing. He would send over to them the heavy garments they had left on their own vessel, and in return would take the boxes of clothes intended for the winter wear of his sailors. In this way they would get their fruit back without the corsairs knowing anything about it. The captain considered this an excellent plan, and ordered the chief mate to take a boat and a flag of truce, and go over to the *Horn o' Plenty* and make the proposition. The eldest boy and two of the others insisted on going also, in order that there might be no mistake about the boxes. But when the flag-of-truce party reached the *Horn o' Plenty* they found not a corsair there! Every man of them had gone. They had taken with them all the money-chests, but, to the great delight of the boys, the boxes of winter clothes had not been disturbed, and in them still nestled, safe and sound, the precious nuts of the Fragile Palm.

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When the matter had been thoroughly looked into, it became quite evident what the corsairs had done. There had been only one boat on board the *Horn o' Plenty*, and that was the one on which the First Class in Long Division had arrived. The night before, the two vessels had passed within a mile or so of a large island, which the captain had approached in the hope it was the one they were looking for, and they passed it so slowly that the corsairs had time to ferry themselves over, a few at a time, in the little boat, taking with them the money — and all without discovery.

Captain Covajos was greatly depressed when he heard of the loss of all the money.

“I shall have a sad tale to tell my merchants,” he said, “and Christmas before last will not be celebrated so joyously as it was the first time. But we cannot help what has happened, and we all must endeavor to bear our losses with patience. We shall continue our search for Apple Island, but I shall go on board my own ship, for I have greatly missed my carpeted quarter-deck and my other comforts. The chief mate, however, and a majority of the crew shall remain on board the corsair vessel and continue to tow us. The *Horn o' Plenty* sails better stern foremost, and we shall go faster that way.”

The boys were overjoyed at recovering their fruit, and most of them were in favor of cracking two or three of the great nuts and eating their contents in honor of the occasion ; but the eldest boy dissuaded them.

“The good captain,” he said, “has been very kind in endeavoring to take us back to our school, and still intends to keep up the search for dear old Apple Island. The least we

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can do for him is to give him this fruit, which is all we have, and let him do what he pleases with it. This is the only way in which we can show our gratitude to him."

The boys turned their backs on one another, and each of them gave his eyes a little rub, but they all agreed to give the fruit to the captain.

When the good old man received his present, he was much affected. "I will accept what you offer me," he said, "for if I did not, I know your feelings would be wounded. But you must keep one of the nuts for yourselves. And, more than that, if we do not find Apple Island in the course of the coming year, I invite you all to spend Christmas before last over again with me at my son's house."

All that winter the two ships sailed up and down, and here and there, but never could they find Apple Island. When Christmas time came, old Baragat went around among the boys and the crew, and told them it would be well not to say a word on the subject to the captain, for his feelings were very tender in regard to spending Christmas away from his families, and the thing had never happened before. So nobody made any allusion to the holidays, and they passed over as if they had been ordinary days.

During the spring, and all through the summer, the two ships kept up the unavailing search, but when the autumn began, Captain Covajos said to old Baragat: "I am very sorry, but I feel that I can no longer look for Apple Island. I must go back and spend Christmas before last over again with my dearest son, and if these poor boys never return to their homes, I am sure they cannot say it was any fault of mine."

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“No, sir,” said Baragat. “I think you have done all that could be expected of you.”

So the ships sailed to the city on the west side of the sea, and the captain was received with great joy by his son and his grandchildren. He went to the merchants, and told them how he had lost all their money. He hoped they would be able to bear their misfortune with fortitude, and begged, as he could do nothing else for them, that they would accept the eight great nuts from the Fragile Palm that the boys had given him. To his surprise, the merchants became wild with delight when they received the nuts. The money they had lost was as nothing, they said, compared to the value of this incomparable and precious fruit, picked in its prime, and still in a perfect condition.

It had been many, many generations since this rare fruit, the value of which was like unto that of diamonds and pearls, had been for sale in any market in the world; and kings and queens in many countries were ready to give for it almost any price that might be asked.

When the good old captain heard this he was greatly rejoiced, and, as the holidays were now near, he insisted that the boys should spend Christmas before last over again at his son’s house. He found that a good many people there knew where Apple Island was, and he made arrangements for the First Class in Long Division to return to that island in a vessel which was to sail about the first of the year.

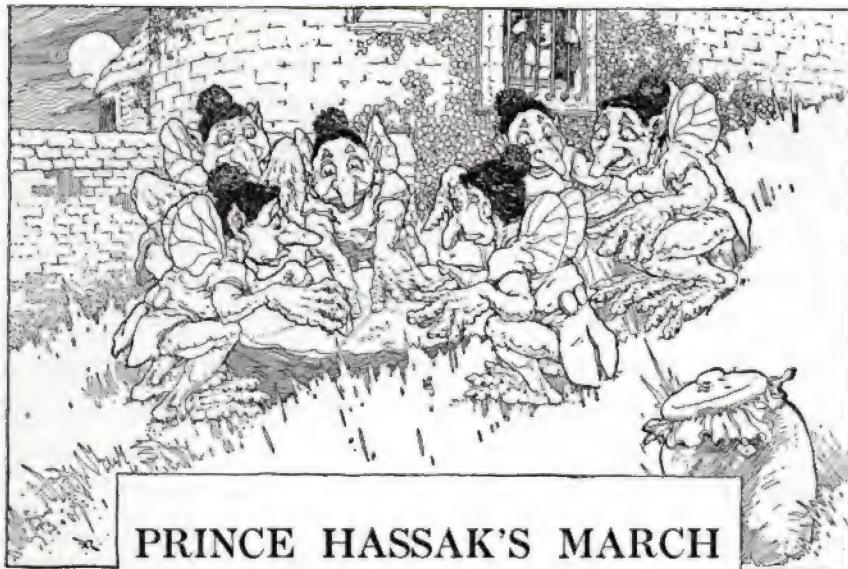
The boys still possessed the great nut which the captain had insisted they should keep for themselves, and he now told them that if they chose to sell it they would each have

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a nice little fortune to take back with them. The eldest boy consulted the others, and then he said to the captain:

“Our class has gone through a good many hardships, and has had a lot of trouble with that palm tree and other things, and we think we ought to be rewarded. So, if it is all the same to you, I think we will crack the nut on Christmas day, and we all will eat it.”

“I never imagined,” cried Captain Covajos, as he sat, on that Christmas day, surrounded by his son’s family and the First Class in Long Division, the eyes of the whole party sparkling with ecstasy as they tasted the peerless fruit of the Fragile Palm, “that Christmas before last could be so joyfully celebrated over again.”



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IN the spring of a certain year, long since passed away, Prince Hassak of Itoby determined to visit his uncle, the King of Yan.

“Whenever my uncle visited us,” said the Prince, “or when my late father went to see him, the journey was always made by sea; and in order to do this it was necessary to go in a very roundabout way between Itoby and Yan. Now, I shall do nothing of this kind. It is beneath the dignity of a prince to go out of his way on account of capes, peninsulas, and promontories. I shall march from my palace to that of my uncle in a straight line. I shall go across the country, and no obstacle shall cause me to deviate from my course. Mountains and hills shall be tunnelled, rivers shall be bridged, houses shall be levelled, a road shall be cut through forests, and when I have finished my march, the course over which I have passed shall be a mathematically straight line. Thus will I show to

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the world that when a prince desires to travel it is not necessary for him to go out of his way on account of obstacles."

As soon as possible after the Prince had determined upon this march, he made his preparations, and set out. He took with him a few courtiers, and a large body of miners, rock-splitters, bridge-builders, and workmen of that class, whose services would, very probably, be needed. Besides these, he had an officer whose duty it was to point out the direct course to be taken, and another who was to draw a map of the march, showing the towns, mountains, and the various places it passed through. There were no compasses in those days, but the course-marker had an instrument which he would set in a proper direction by means of the stars, and then he could march by it all day. Besides these persons, Prince Hassak selected from the schools of his city five boys and five girls, and took them with him. He wished to show them how, when a thing was to be done, the best way was to go straight ahead and do it, turning aside for nothing.

"When they grow up they will teach these things to their children," said he, "and thus I shall instil good principles into my people."

The first day Prince Hassak and his party marched over a level country, with no further trouble than that occasioned by the tearing down of fences and walls, and the destruction of a few cottages and barns. After encamping for the night, they set out the next morning, but had not marched many miles before they came to a rocky hill, on the top of which was a handsome house, inhabited by a Jolly-cum-pop.

"Your Highness," said the course-marker, "in order to go

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in a direct line we must make a tunnel through this hill, immediately under the house. This may cause the building to fall in, but the rubbish can be easily removed."

"Let the men go to work," said the Prince. "I will dismount from my horse and watch the proceedings."

When the Jolly-cum-pop saw the party halt before his house, he hurried out to pay his respects to the Prince. When he was informed of what was to be done, the Jolly-cum-pop could not refrain from laughing aloud.

"I never heard," he said, "of such a capital idea. It is so odd and original. It will be very funny, I am sure, to see a tunnel cut right under my house."

The miners and rock-splitters now began to work at the base of the hill, and then the Jolly-cum-pop made a proposition to the Prince.

"It will take your men some time," he said, "to cut this tunnel, and it is a pity your Highness should not be amused in the meanwhile. It is a fine day; suppose we go into the forest and hunt."

This suited the Prince very well, for he did not care about sitting under a tree and watching his workmen, and the Jolly-cum-pop having sent for his horse and some bows and arrows, the whole party, with the exception of the laborers, rode toward the forest, a short distance away.

"What shall we find to hunt?" asked the Prince of the Jolly-cum-pop.

"I really do not know," exclaimed the latter, "but we'll hunt whatever we happen to see—deer, small birds, rabbits, griffins, rhinoceroses, anything that comes along. I feel as

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gay as a skipping grasshopper. My spirits rise like a soaring bird. What a joyful thing it is to have such a hunt on such a glorious day!"

The gay and happy spirits of the Jolly-cum-pop affected the whole party, and they rode merrily through the forest. But they found no game, and, after an hour or two, they emerged into the open country again. At a distance, on a slight elevation, stood a large and massive building.

"I am hungry and thirsty," said the Prince, "and perhaps we can get some refreshments at yonder house. So far, this has not been a very fine hunt."

"No," cried the Jolly-cum-pop, "not yet. But what a joyful thing to see a hospitable mansion just at the moment when we begin to feel a little tired and hungry!"

The building they were approaching belonged to a potentate who lived at a great distance. In some of his travels he had seen this massive house, and thought it would make a good prison. He accordingly bought it, fitted it up as a jail, and appointed a jailer and three myrmidons to take charge of it. This had occurred years before, but no prisoners had ever been sent to this jail. A few days preceding the Jolly-cum-pop's hunt, the Potentate had journeyed this way and had stopped at his jail. After inquiring into its condition, he had said to the jailer:

"It is now fourteen years since I appointed you to this place, and in all that time there have been no prisoners, and you and your men have been drawing your wages without doing anything. I shall return this way in a few days, and if I still find you idle I shall discharge you all and close the jail."

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This filled the jailer with great dismay, for he did not wish to lose his good situation. When he saw the Prince and his party approaching, the thought struck him that perhaps he might make prisoners of them, and so not be found idle when the Potentate returned. He came to meet the hunters, and when they asked if they could here find refreshment, he gave them a most cordial welcome. His men took their horses, and, inviting them to enter, he showed each member of the party into a small bedroom, of which there seemed to be a great many.

“Here are water and towels,” he said to each one, “and when you have washed your face and hands, your refreshments will be ready.” Then, going out, he locked the door on the outside.

The party numbered seventeen: the prince, three courtiers, five boys, five girls, the course-marker, the map-maker, and the Jolly-cum-pop. The heart of the jailer was joyful. Seventeen inmates was something to be proud of. He ordered his myrmidons to give the prisoners a meal of bread and water, through the holes in their cell doors, and then he sat down to make out his report to the Potentate.

“They must all be guilty of crimes,” he said to himself, “which are punished by long imprisonment. I don’t want any of them executed.”

So he numbered his prisoners from one to seventeen, according to the cell each happened to be in, and he wrote a crime opposite each number. The first was highway robbery, the next forgery, and after that followed treason, smuggling, barn-burning, bribery, poaching, usury, piracy, witchcraft, as-

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sault and battery, using false weights and measures, burglary, counterfeiting, robbing hen-roosts, conspiracy, and poisoning his grandmother by proxy.

This report was scarcely finished when the Potentate returned. He was very much surprised to find that seventeen prisoners had come in since his previous visit, and he read the report with interest.

"Here is one who ought to be executed," he said, referring to Number Seventeen. "And how did he poison his grandmother by proxy? Did he get another woman to be poisoned in her stead? Or did he employ some one to act in his place as the poisoner?"

"I have not yet been fully informed, my lord," said the jailer, fearful that he should lose a prisoner. "But this is his first offence, and his grandmother, who did not die, has testified to his general good character."

"Very well," said the Potentate. "But if he ever does it again, let him be executed. And, by the way, I should like to see the prisoners."

Thereupon the jailer conducted the Potentate along the corridors, and let him look through the holes in the doors at the prisoners within.

"What is this little girl in for?" he asked.

The jailer looked at the number over the door, and then at his report.

"Piracy," he answered.

"A strange offence for such a child," said the Potentate.

"They often begin that sort of thing very early in life," said the jailer.

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“And this fine gentleman,” said the Potentate, looking in at the Prince, “what did he do?”

The jailer glanced at the number, and then at the report.

“Robbed hen-roosts,” he said.

“He must have done a good deal of it to afford to dress so well,” said the Potentate, passing on, and looking into other cells. “It seems to me that many of your prisoners are very young.”

“It is best to take them young, my lord,” said the jailer. “They are very hard to catch when they grow up.”

The Potentate then looked in at the Jolly-cum-pop, and asked what was his offence.

“Conspiracy,” was the answer.

“And where are the other conspirators?”

“There was only one,” said the jailer.

Number Seventeen was the oldest of the courtiers.

“He appears to be an elderly man to have a grandmother,” said the Potentate. “She must be very aged, and that makes it all the worse for him. I think he should be executed.”

“Oh, no, my lord,” cried the jailer. “I am assured that his crime was quite unintentional.”

“Then he should be set free,” said the Potentate.

“I mean to say,” said the jailer, “that it was just enough intentional to cause him to be imprisoned here for a long time, but not enough to deserve execution.”

“Very well,” said the Potentate, turning to leave. “Take good care of your prisoners, and send me a report every month.”

“That will I do, my lord,” said the jailer, bowing very low.

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The Prince and his party had been very much surprised and incensed when they found that they could not get out of their rooms, and they had kicked and banged and shouted until they were tired ; but the jailer had informed them that they were to be confined there for years, and when the Potentate arrived they had resigned themselves to despair. The Jolly-cum-pop, however, was affected in a different way. It seemed to him the most amusing joke in the world that a person should deliberately walk into a prison cell and be locked up for several years ; and he lay down on his little bed and laughed himself to sleep.

That night one of the boys sat at his iron-barred window, wide-awake. He was a truant, and had never yet been in any place from which he could not run away. He felt that his schoolfellows depended upon him to run away and bring them assistance, and he knew that his reputation as a truant was at stake. His responsibility was so heavy that he could not sleep, and he sat at the window, trying to think of a way to get out. After some hours the moon arose, and by its light he saw upon the grass, not far from his window, a number of little creatures which at first he took for birds or small squirrels ; but on looking more attentively he perceived that they were pigwidgeons. They were standing around a flat stone, and seemed to be making calculations on it with a piece of chalk. At this sight the heart of the Truant jumped for joy. "Pigwidgeons can do anything," he said to himself, "and certainly these can get us out."

He tried in various ways to attract the attention of the pigwidgeons ; but as he was afraid to call or whistle very

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loud, for fear of arousing the jailer, he did not succeed. Happily he thought of a pea-shooter which he had in his pocket, and taking this out, he blew a pea into the midst of the little group with such force that it knocked the chalk from the hand of the pigwidgeon who was using it. The little fellows looked up in astonishment, and perceived the Truant beckoning to them from his window. At first they stood angrily regarding him. But on his urging them in a loud whisper to come to his relief, they approached the prison, and, clambering up a vine, soon reached his windowsill. The Truant now told his mournful tale, to which the pigwidgeons listened very attentively, and then, after a little consultation among themselves, one of them said: "We will get you out if you will tell us how to divide five sevenths by six."

The poor Truant was silent for an instant, and then he said: "That is not the kind of thing I am good at, but I expect some of the other fellows could tell you easily enough. Our windows must be all in a row, and you can climb up and ask some of them, and if any one tells you, will you get us all out?"

"Yes," said the pigwidgeon who had spoken before. "We will do that, for we are very anxious to know how to divide five sevenths by six. We have been working at it for four or five days, and there won't be anything worth dividing if we wait much longer."

The pigwidgeons now began to descend the vine. But one of them lingering a little, the Truant, who had a great deal of curiosity, asked him what it was they had to divide.

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“There were eight of us,” the pigwidgeon answered, “who helped a farmer’s wife, and she gave us a pound of butter. She did not count us properly, and divided the butter into seven parts. We did not notice this at first, and two of the party, who were obliged to go away to a distance, took their portions and departed, and now we cannot divide among six the five sevenths that remain.”

“That is a pretty hard thing,” said the Truant, “but I am sure some of the boys can tell you how to do it.”

The pigwidgeons visited the next four cells, which were occupied by four boys, but not one of them could tell how to divide five sevenths by six. The Prince was questioned, but he did not know, and neither did the course-marker, nor the map-maker. It was not until they came to the cell of the oldest girl that they received an answer. She was good at mental arithmetic, and, after a minute’s thought, she told them that it would be five forty-seconds.

“Good!” cried the pigwidgeons. “We will divide the butter into forty-two parts, and each take five. And now let us go to work and cut these bars.”

Three of the six pigwidgeons were workers in iron, and they had their little files and saws in pouches by their sides. They went to work manfully, and the others helped them, and before morning one bar was cut in each of the seventeen windows. The cells were all on the ground floor, and it was quite easy for the prisoners to clamber out—that is, it was easy for all but the Jolly-cum-pop. He had laughed so much in his life that he had grown quite fat, and he found it impossible to squeeze himself through the opening made

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by the removal of one iron bar. The sixteen other prisoners had all departed. The pigwidgeons had hurried away to divide their butter into forty-two parts, and the Jolly-cum-pop still remained in his cell, convulsed with laughter at the idea of being caught in such a curious predicament.

"It is the most ridiculous thing in the world," he said. "I suppose I must stay here and cry until I get thin." And the idea so tickled him that he laughed himself to sleep.

The Prince and his party kept together, and hurried from the prison as fast as they could. When the day broke they had gone several miles, and then they stopped to rest. "Where is that Jolly-cum-pop?" said the Prince. "I suppose he has gone home. He is a pretty fellow to lead us into this trouble and then desert us! How are we to find the way back to his house? Course-marker, can you tell us the direction in which we should go?"

"Not until to-night, your Highness," answered the course-marker, "when I can set my instrument by the stars."

The Prince's party was now in a doleful plight. Every one was very hungry. They were in an open plain, no house was visible, and they knew not which way to go. They wandered about for some time, looking for a brook or a spring where they might quench their thirst, and then a rabbit sprang out from some bushes. The whole party immediately started off in pursuit of the rabbit. They chased it here, there, backward and forward, through hollows and over hills, until it ran quite away and disappeared. Then they were more tired, thirsty, and hungry than before, and to add to their miseries, when night came on, the sky was cloudy, and the course-marker

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could not set his instrument by the stars. It would be difficult to find sixteen people more miserable than the Prince and his companions when they awoke the next morning from their troubled sleep on the hard ground. Nearly starved, they gazed at one another with feelings of despair.

“I feel,” said the Prince, in a weak voice, “that there is nothing I would not do to obtain food. I would willingly become a slave if my master would give me a good breakfast.”

“So would I,” ejaculated each of the others.

About an hour after this, as they were all sitting disconsolately upon the ground, they saw, slowly approaching, a large cart drawn by a pair of oxen. On the front of the cart, which seemed to be heavily loaded, sat a man with a red beard, reading a book.

The boys, when they saw the cart, set up a feeble shout, and the man, lifting his eyes from his book, drove directly toward the group on the ground. Dismounting, he approached Prince Hassak, who immediately told him his troubles and implored relief. “We will do anything,” said the Prince, “to obtain food.”

Standing for a minute in a reflective mood, the man with the red beard addressed the Prince in a slow, meditative manner. “How would you like,” he said, “to form a nucleus?”

“Can we get anything to eat by it?” eagerly asked the Prince.

“Yes,” replied the man, “you can.”

“We'll do it!” immediately cried the whole sixteen, without waiting for further information.

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“Which will you do first,” said the man, “listen to my explanations, or eat ?”

“Eat !” cried the entire sixteen in chorus.

The man now produced from his cart a quantity of bread, meat, wine, and other provisions, which he distributed generously, but judiciously, to the hungry Prince and his followers. Every one had enough, but no one too much. Soon, revived and strengthened, they felt like new beings.

“Now,” said the Prince, “we are ready to form a nucleus, as we promised. How is it done ?”

“I will explain the matter to you in a few words,” said the man with the red beard. “For a long time I have been desirous to found a city. In order to do this, one must begin by forming a nucleus. Every great city is started from a nucleus. A few persons settle down in some particular spot, and live there. Then they are a nucleus. Then other people come there, and gather around this nucleus, and then more people come, and more, until in course of time there is a great city. I have loaded this cart with provisions, tools, and other things that are necessary for my purpose, and have set out to find some people who would be willing to form a nucleus. I am very glad to have found you, and that you are willing to enter into my plan. And this seems a good spot for us to settle upon.”

“What is the first thing to be done ?” said the Prince.

“We must all go to work,” said the man with the red beard, “to build dwellings, and also a schoolhouse for these young people. Then we must till some ground in the suburbs, and lay the foundations, at least, of a few public buildings.”

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“ All this will take a good while, will it not ? ” said the Prince.

“ Yes,” said the man, “ it will take a good while, and the sooner we set about it, the better.”

Thereupon tools were distributed among the party, and Prince, courtiers, boys, girls, and all, went to work to build houses and form the nucleus of a city.

When the jailer looked into his cells in the morning, and found that all but one of his prisoners had escaped, he was utterly astounded, and his face, when the Jolly-cum-pop saw him, made that individual roar with laughter. The jailer, however, was a man accustomed to deal with emergencies. “ You need not laugh,” he said; “ everything shall go on as before, and I shall take no notice of the absence of your companions. You are now numbered One to Seventeen inclusive, and you stand charged with highway robbery, forgery, treason, smuggling, barn-burning, bribery, poaching, usury, piracy, witchcraft, assault and battery, using false weights and measures, burglary, counterfeiting, robbing hen-roosts, conspiracy, and poisoning your grandmother by proxy. I intended to-day to dress the convicts in prison garb, and you shall immediately be so clothed.”

“ I shall require seventeen suits,” said the Jolly-cum-pop.

“ Yes,” said the jailer, “ they shall be furnished.”

“ And seventeen rations a day,” said the Jolly-cum-pop.

“ Certainly,” replied the jailer.

“ This is luxury,” roared the Jolly-cum-pop. “ I shall spend my whole time in eating and putting on clean clothes.”

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Seventeen large prison suits were now brought to the Jolly-cum-pop. He put one on, and hung up the rest in his cell. These suits were half bright yellow and half bright green, with spots of bright red as big as saucers.

The jailer now had doors cut from one cell to another. "If the Potentate comes here and wants to look at the prisoners," he said to the Jolly-cum-pop, "you must appear in cell Number One, so that he can look through the hole in the door and see you. Then, as he walks along the corridor, you must walk through the cells, and whenever he looks into a cell you must be there."

"He will think," merrily replied the Jolly-cum-pop, "that all your prisoners are very fat, and that the little girls have grown up into big men."

"I shall endeavor to explain that," said the jailer.

For several days the Jolly-cum-pop was highly amused at the idea of his being seventeen criminals, and he would sit first in one cell and then in another, trying to look like a ferocious pirate, a hard-hearted usurer, or a mean-spirited chicken-thief, and laughing heartily at his failures. But after a time he began to tire of this, and to have a strong desire to see what sort of a tunnel the Prince's miners and rock-splitters were making under his house. "I had hoped," he said to himself, "that I should pine away in confinement, and so be able to get through the window-bars. But with nothing to do, and seventeen rations a day, I see no chance of that. But I must get out of this jail, and as there seems no other way, I will revolt." Thereupon he shouted to the jailer through the hole in the door of his cell: "We have

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revolted! We have risen in a body, and have determined to resist your authority and break jail!"

When the jailer heard this he was greatly troubled. "Do not proceed to violence," he said. "Let us parley."

"Very well," replied the Jolly-cum-pop, "but you must open the cell door. We cannot parley through a hole."

The jailer thereupon opened the cell door, and the Jolly-cum-pop, having wrapped sixteen suits of clothes around his left arm as a shield, and holding in his right hand the iron bar which had been cut from his window, stepped boldly into the corridor and confronted the jailer and his myrmidons.

"It will be useless for you to resist," he said. "You are but four, and we are seventeen. If you had been wise you would have made us all cheating shop-keepers, chicken-thieves, or usurers. Then you might have been able to control us. But when you see before you a desperate highwayman, a daring smuggler, a bloodthirsty pirate, a wily poacher, a powerful ruffian, a reckless burglar, a bold conspirator, and a murderer by proxy, you well may tremble!"

The jailer and his myrmidons looked at each other in dismay.

"We sigh for no blood," continued the Jolly-cum-pop, "and will readily agree to terms. We will give you your choice: Will you allow us honorably to surrender, and peacefully disperse to our homes, or shall we rush upon you in a body, and, after overpowering you by numbers, set fire to the jail, and escape through the crackling timbers of the burning pile?"

The jailer reflected for a minute. "It would be better,

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perhaps," he said, "that you should surrender and disperse to your homes."

The Jolly-cum-pop agreed to these terms, and the great gate being opened, he marched out in good order. "Now," said he to himself, "the thing for me to do is to get home as fast as I can, or that jailer may change his mind." But, being in a great hurry, he turned the wrong way, and walked rapidly into a country unknown to him. His walk was a very merry one. "By this time," he said to himself, "the Prince and his followers have returned to my house, and are tired of watching the rock-splitters and miners. How amused they will be when they see me come back in this gay suit of green and yellow with red spots, and with sixteen similar suits upon my arm! How my own dogs will bark at me! How my own servants will not know me! It is the funniest thing I ever knew of!" And his gay laugh echoed far and wide. But when he had gone several miles without seeing any signs of his habitation, his gayety abated. "It would have been much better," he said, as he sat down to rest under the shade of a tree, "if I had brought with me sixteen rations instead of these sixteen suits of clothes."

The Jolly-cum-pop soon set out again, but he walked a long distance without seeing any person or any house. Toward the close of the afternoon he stopped, and looking back, he saw coming toward him a large party of foot travellers. In a few moments he perceived that the person in advance was the jailer. At this the Jolly-cum-pop could not restrain his merriment. "How comically it has all turned out!" he exclaimed. "Here I've taken all this trouble, and

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tired myself out, and nearly starved myself, and the jailer comes now, with a crowd of people, to take me back. I might as well have stayed where I was. Ha! ha!"

The jailer now left his party and came running toward the Jolly-cum-pop. "I pray you, sir," he said, bowing very low, "do not cast us off."

"Who are you all?" asked the Jolly-cum-pop, looking with much surprise at the jailer's companions, who were now quite near.

"We are myself, my three myrmidons, and our wives and children. Our situations were such good ones that we married long ago and our families lived in the upper stories of the prison. But when all the convicts had left we were afraid to remain, for, should the Potentate again visit the prison, he would be disappointed and enraged at finding no prisoners, and probably would punish us grievously. So we determined to follow you, and to ask you to let us go with you, wherever you are going. I wrote a report, which I fastened to the great gate, and in it I stated that sixteen of the convicts escaped by the aid of outside confederates, and that seventeen of them mutinied in a body and broke jail."

"That report," laughed the Jolly-cum-pop, "your Potentate will not readily understand."

"If I were there," said the jailer, "I could explain it to him. But, as it is, he must work it out for himself."

"Have you anything to eat with you?" asked the Jolly-cum-pop.

"Oh, yes," said the jailer, "we brought provisions."

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“ Well, then, I gladly take you under my protection. Let us have supper. I have had nothing to eat since morning, and the weight of sixteen extra suits of clothes does not help to refresh one.”

The Jolly-cum-pop and his companions slept that night under some trees, and started off early the next morning. “ If I could only get myself turned in the proper direction,” said he, “ I believe we should soon reach my house.”

The Prince, his courtiers, the boys and girls, the course-marker, and the map-maker worked industriously for several days at the foundation of their city. They dug the ground, they carried stones, they cut down trees. This work was very hard for all of them, for they were not used to it. After a few days’ labor, the Prince said to the man with the red beard, who was reading his book: “ I think we have now formed a nucleus. Any one can see that this is intended to be a city.”

“ No,” said the man with the red beard, “ nothing is truly a nucleus until something is gathered around it. Proceed with your work, while I continue my studies upon civil government.”

Toward the close of that day the red-bearded man raised his eyes from his book and beheld the Jolly-cum-pop and his party approaching. “ Hurrah!” he cried, “ we are already attracting settlers!” And he went forth to meet them.

When the Prince and the courtiers saw the Jolly-cum-pop in his bright and variegated dress, they did not know him. But the boys and girls soon recognized his jovial face, and, tired as they were, they set up a hearty laugh, in which they

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were loudly joined by their merry friend. While the Jolly-cum-pop was listening to the adventures of the Prince and his companions, and telling what had happened to himself, the man with the red beard was talking to the jailer and his party, and urging them to gather around the nucleus which had been here formed, and help to build a city.

“Nothing will suit us better,” exclaimed the jailer, “and the sooner we build a town wall so as to keep off the Potentate, if he should come this way, the better shall we be satisfied.”

The next morning the Prince said to the red-bearded man: “Others have gathered around us. We have formed a nucleus, and thus have done all that we promised to do. We shall now depart.”

The man objected strongly to this, but the Prince paid no attention to his words. “What troubles me most,” he said to the Jolly-cum-pop, “is the disgraceful condition of our clothes. They have been so torn and soiled during our unaccustomed work that they are not fit to be seen.”

“As for that,” said the Jolly-cum-pop, “I have sixteen suits with me, in which you can all dress, if you like. They are of unusual patterns, but they are new and clean.”

“It is better,” said the Prince, “for persons in my station to appear inordinately gay than to be seen in rags and dirt. We will accept your clothes.”

Thereupon the Prince and each of the others put on a prison dress of bright green and yellow with large red spots. There were some garments left over, for each boy wore only a pair of trousers with the waistband tied around his neck,

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and holes cut for his arms, while the large jackets, with the sleeves tucked, made very good dresses for the girls. The Prince and his party, accompanied by the Jolly-cum-pop, now left the red-bearded man and his new settlers to continue the building of the city, and set off on their journey. The course-marker had not been informed the night before that they were to go away that morning, and consequently had not set his instrument by the stars.

“As we do not know in which way we should go,” said the Prince, “one way will be as good as another, and if we can find a road let us take it. It will be easier walking.”

In an hour or two they found a road, and they took it. After journeying the greater part of the day, they reached the top of a low hill, over which the road ran, and saw before them a glittering sea and the spires and houses of a city.

“It is the city of Yan,” said the course-marker.

“That is true,” said the Prince, “and as we are so near, we may as well go there.”

The astonishment of the people of Yan, when this party, dressed in bright green and yellow with red spots, passed through their streets, was so great that the Jolly-cum-pop roared with laughter. This set the boys and girls and all the people laughing, and the sounds of merriment became so uproarious that when they reached the palace the King came out to see what was the matter. What he thought when he saw his nephew in his fantastic guise, accompanied by a party apparently composed of sixteen other lunatics, cannot now be known. But, after hearing the Prince’s story, he took him into an inner apartment, and thus addressed him: “My dear

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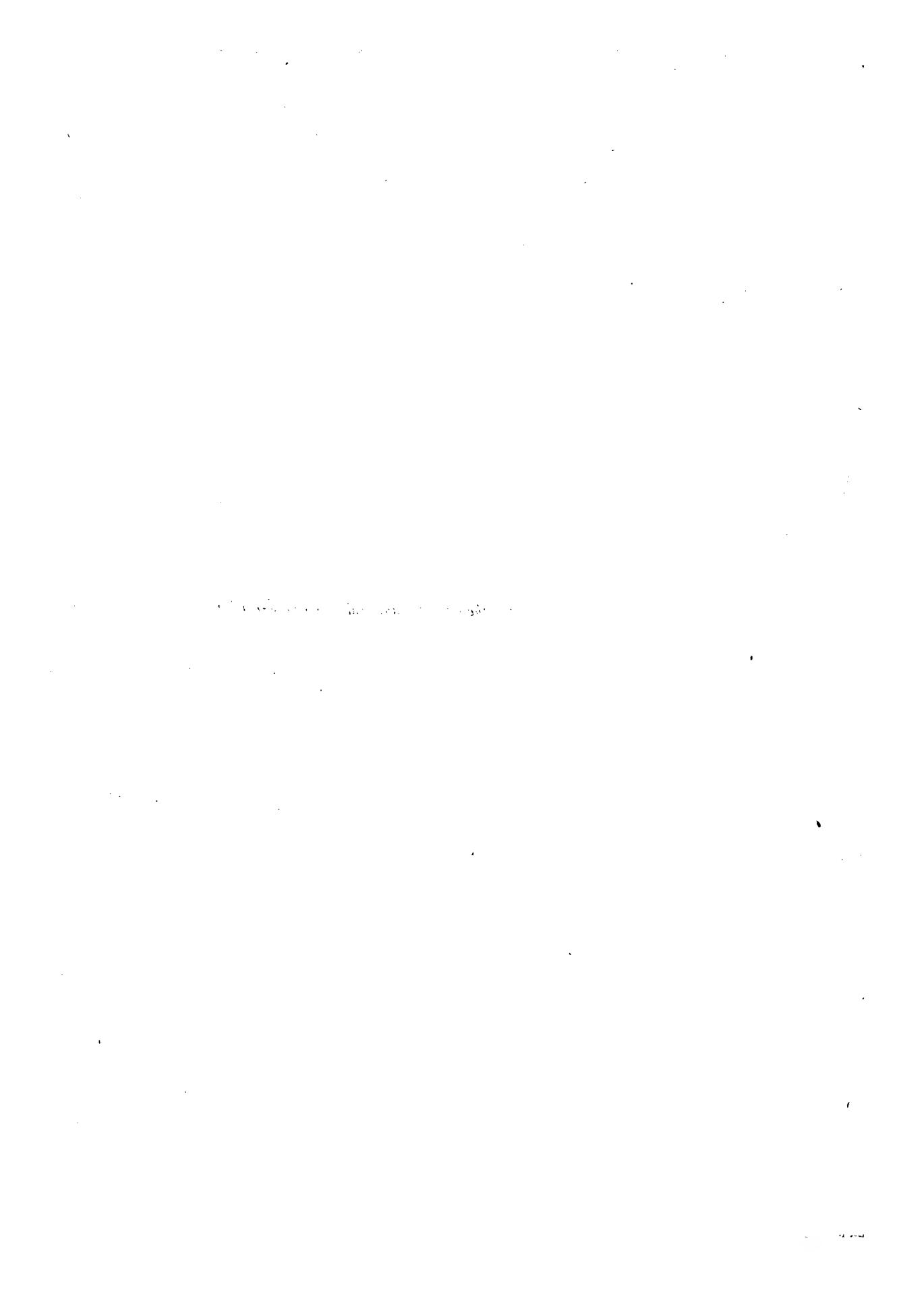
Hassak: The next time you pay me a visit, I beg, for your sake and my own, that you will come in the ordinary way. You have sufficiently shown to the world that, when a prince desires to travel, it is often necessary for him to go out of his way on account of obstacles."

"My dear uncle," replied Hassak, "your words shall not be forgotten."

After a pleasant visit of a few weeks, the Prince and his party (in new clothes) returned (by sea) to Itoby, whence the Jolly-cum-pop soon repaired to his home. There he found the miners and rock-splitters still at work at the tunnel, which had now penetrated half-way through the hill on which stood his house. "You may go home," he said, "for the Prince has changed his plans. I will put a door to this tunnel, and it will make an excellent cellar in which to keep my wine and provisions."

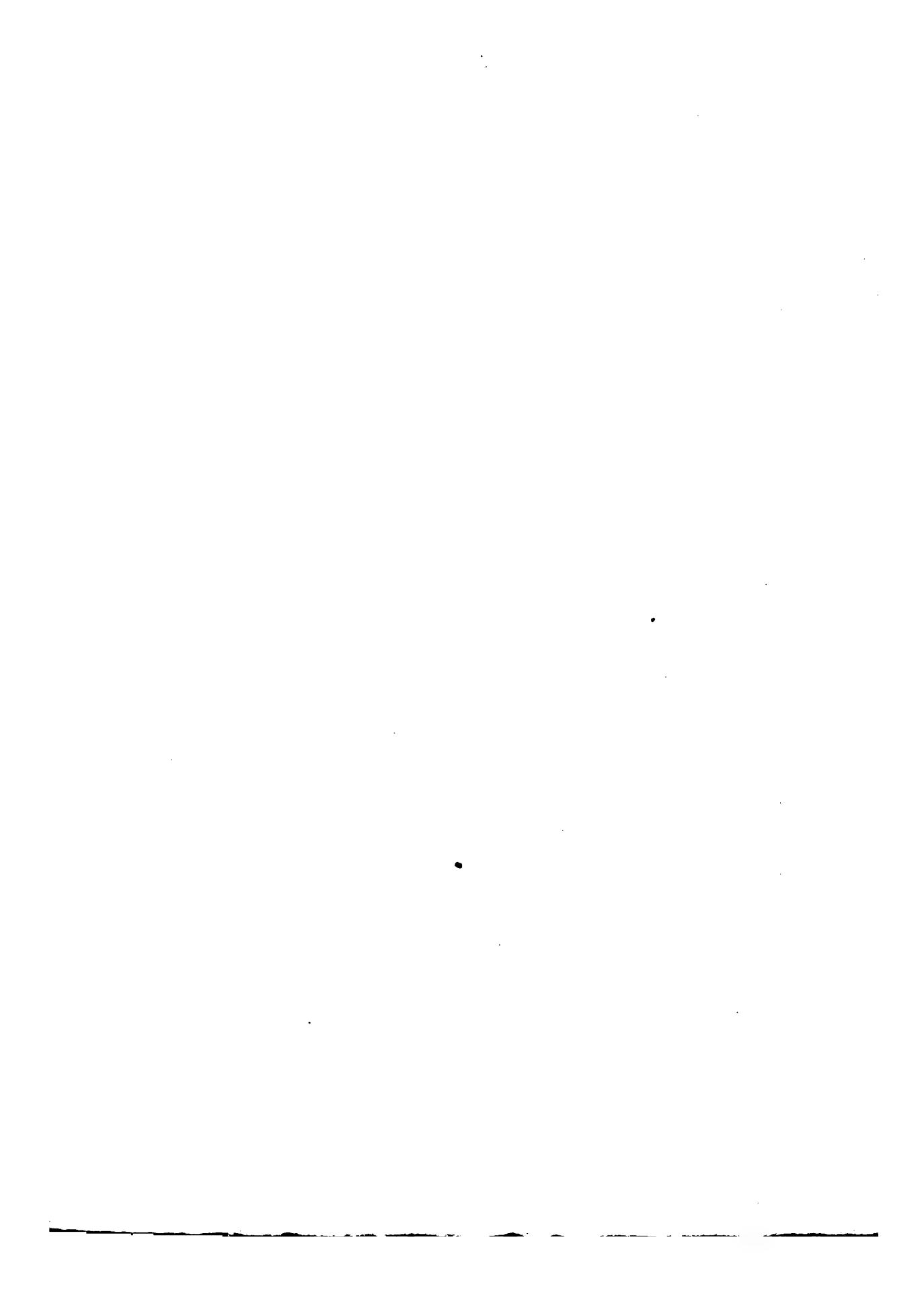
The day after the Prince's return his map-maker said to him: "Your Highness, according to your commands, I made, each day, a map of your progress to the city of Yan. Here it is."

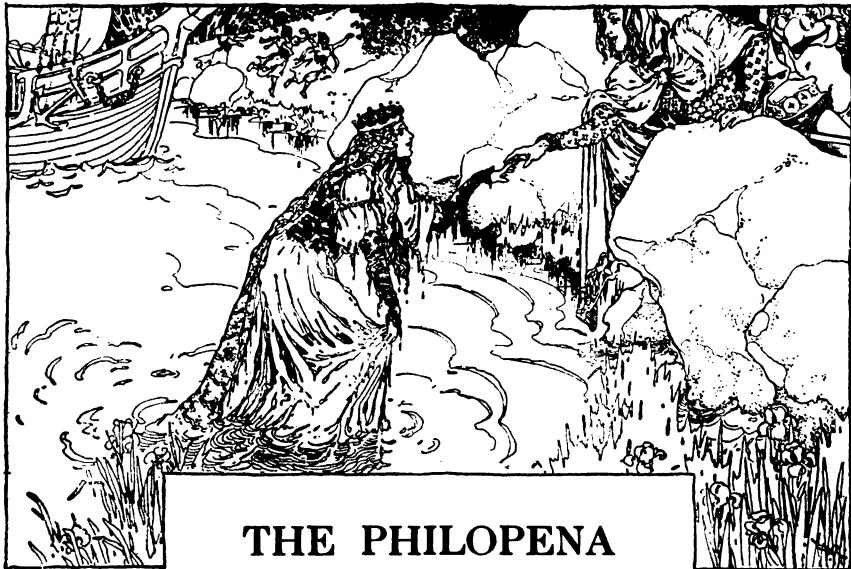
The Prince glanced at it and then he cast his eyes upon the floor. "Leave me," he said. "I would be alone."



“It is the city of Yan,” said the course-marker.







THE PHIOPENA

THERE were once a prince and a princess who, when quite young, ate a philopena together. They agreed that the one who, at any hour after sunrise the next day, should accept anything from the other — the giver at the same time saying “ Philopena ! ” — should be the loser, and that the loser should marry the other.

They did not meet the next day, as they had expected, and at the time our story begins many years had elapsed since they had seen each other; and the Prince and the Princess were nearly grown up. They often thought of the philopena they had eaten together, and wondered if they should know each other when they met. He remembered her as a pretty little girl dressed in green silk, playing with a snow-white cat, while she remembered him as a handsome boy, wearing a little sword, the handle of which was covered with jewels. But they knew that each must have changed a great deal in all this time.

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Neither of these young people had any parents. The Prince lived with guardians and the Princess with uncles.

The guardians of the Prince were very enterprising and energetic men, and were allowed to govern the country until the Prince came of age. The capital city was a very fine city when the old king died, but the guardians thought it might be much finer, so they set to work with all their might and main to improve it. They tore down old houses and made a great many new streets ; they built grand and splendid bridges over the river on which the city stood ; they constructed aqueducts to bring water from streams many miles away ; and they were at work all the time upon some extensive building enterprise.

The Prince did not take much interest in the works which were going on under direction of his guardians, and when he rode out, he preferred to go into the country or to ride through some of the quaint old streets where nothing had been changed for hundreds of years.

The uncles of the Princess were very different people from the guardians of the Prince. There were three of them, and they were very quiet and cosey old men, who disliked any kind of bustle or disturbance, and wished that everything might remain as they had always known it. It even worried them a little to find that the Princess was growing up. They would have much preferred that she should remain exactly as she was when they first took charge of her. Then they never would have been obliged to trouble their minds about any changes in the manner of taking care of her. But they did not worry their minds very much, after all. They wished to make her guardianship as little laborious or exhausting as possible, and

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so divided the work. One of them took charge of her education, another of her food and lodging, and the third of her dress. The first sent for teachers, and told them to teach her; the second had handsome apartments prepared for her use, and gave orders that she should have everything she needed to eat and to drink; while the third commanded that she should have a complete outfit of new clothes four times a year. Thus everything went on very quietly and smoothly, and the three uncles were not obliged to exhaust themselves by hard work. There were never any new houses built in that city, and if anything had to be repaired, it was done with as little noise and dirt as possible. The city and the whole kingdom were quiet and serene, and the three uncles dozed away most of the day in three great, comfortable thrones.

Everybody seemed satisfied with this state of things except the Princess. She often thought to herself that nothing would be more delightful than a little noise and motion, and she wondered if the whole world were as quiet as the city in which she lived. At last she became unable to bear the dreadful stillness of the place any longer, but she could think of nothing to do but to go and try to find the Prince with whom she had eaten the philopena. If she should win, he must marry her, and then, perhaps, they could settle down in some place where things would be bright and lively. So, early one morning, she put on her white dress, and mounting her prancing black horse she rode away from the city. Only one person saw her go, for nearly all the people were asleep.

About this time, the Prince made up his mind that he could no longer stand the din and confusion, the everlasting

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upsetting and setting-up in his native city. He would go away, and see if he could find the Princess with whom he had eaten the philopena. If he should win, she would be obliged to marry him, and then, perhaps they could settle down in some place where it was quiet and peaceful. So, on the same morning in which the Princess rode away, he put on a handsome suit of black clothes, and mounting a gentle white horse, he rode out of the city. Only one person saw him go, for, even at that early hour, the people were so busy that little attention was paid to his movements.

About half-way between these two cities, in a tall tower which stood upon a hill, there lived an Inquisitive Dwarf, whose whole object in life was to find out what people were doing and why they did it. From the top of this tower he generally managed to see all that was going on in the surrounding country. And in each of the two cities that have been mentioned he had an agent, whose duty it was to send him word, by means of carrier-pigeons, whenever a new thing happened. Before breakfast on the morning when the Prince and Princess rode away, a pigeon from the city of the Prince came flying to the tower of the Inquisitive Dwarf.

“Some new building started, I suppose,” said the Dwarf, as he took the little roll of paper from under the pigeon’s wing. “But no, it is very different!”

“‘The Prince has ridden away from the city alone, and is travelling to the north.’”

But before he could begin to puzzle his brains about the meaning of this departure, another pigeon came flying in from the city of the Princess.

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“Well!” cried the Dwarf, “this is amazing! It is a long time since I have had a message from that city, and my agent has been drawing his salary without doing any work. What possibly can have happened there?”

When he read that the Princess had ridden alone from the city that morning, and was travelling to the south, he was truly amazed.

“What on earth can it mean?” he exclaimed. “If the city of the Prince were to the south of that of the Princess, then I might understand it, for they would be going to see each other, and that would be natural enough. But as his city is to the north of her city, they are travelling in opposite directions. Now what is the meaning of this? I most certainly must find out.”

The Inquisitive Dwarf had three servants whom he employed to attend to his most important business. These were a Gryphoness, a Water Sprite, and an Absolute Fool. This last one was very valuable, for there were some things he would do which no one else would think of attempting. The Dwarf called to him the Gryphoness, the oldest and most discreet of the three, and told her of the departure of the Princess.

“Hasten southward,” he said, “as fast as you can, and follow her, and do not return to me until you have found out why she left her city, where she is going, and what she expects to do when she gets there. Your appearance may frighten her, and, therefore, you must take with you the Absolute Fool, to whom she will probably be willing to talk. But you must see that everything is managed properly.”

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Having despatched these two, the Inquisitive Dwarf then called the Water Sprite, who was singing to herself at the edge of a fountain, and telling her of the departure of the Prince, ordered her to follow him, and not to return until she had found out why he left his city, where he was going, and what he intended to do when he got there.

“The road to the north,” he said, “lies along the river-bank. Therefore you can easily keep him company.”

The Water Sprite bowed, and dancing over the dewy grass to the river, threw herself into it. Sometimes she swam beneath the clear water, sometimes she rose partly in the air, where she seemed like a little cloud of sparkling mist borne onward by the wind, and sometimes she floated upon the surface, her pale blue robes undulating with the gentle waves, while her white hands and feet shone in the sun like tiny crests of foam. Thus, singing to herself, she went joyously and rapidly on, aided by a full, strong wind from the south. She did not forget to glance every now and then upon the road which ran along the river-bank, and, in the course of the morning, she perceived the Prince. He was sitting in the shade of a tree near the water’s edge, while his white horse was grazing near by.

The Water Sprite came very gently out of the river, and seating herself upon the edge of the grassy bank, she spoke to him. The Prince looked up in astonishment, but there was nothing in her appearance to frighten him.

“I came,” said the Water Sprite, “at the command of my master, to ask you why you left your city, where you are going, and what you intend to do when you get there.”

*The Inquisitive Dwarf had three servants . . . a Gryphoness,
a Water Sprite, and an Absolute Fool.*





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The Prince then told her why he had left his city, and what he intended to do when he had found the Princess.

“But where I am going,” he said, “I do not know myself. I must travel and travel until I succeed in the object of my search.”

The Water Sprite reflected for a moment, and then she said :

“If I were you, I would not travel to the north. It is cold and dreary there, and your Princess would not dwell in such a region. A little above us, on the other side of this river, there is a stream which runs sometimes to the east and sometimes to the south, and which leads to the Land of the Lovely Lakes. This is the most beautiful country in the world, and you will be much more likely to find your Princess in those lovely regions than among the desolate mountains of the north.”

“I dare say you are right,” said the Prince, “and I will go there, if you will show me the way.”

“The road runs along the bank of the river,” said the Water Sprite, “and we shall soon reach the Land of the Lovely Lakes.”

The Prince then mounted his horse, forded the river, and was soon riding along the bank of the stream, while the Water Sprite gayly floated upon its dancing ripples.

When the Gryphoness started southward in pursuit of the Princess, she kept out of sight among the bushes by the roadside, but sped swiftly along. The Absolute Fool, however, mounted upon a fine horse, rode boldly along upon the open road. He was a good-looking youth, with rosy cheeks, bright

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eyes, and a handsome figure. As he cantered gayly along, he felt himself capable of every noble action which the human mind has ever conceived. The Gryphoness kept near him, and in the course of the morning they overtook the Princess, who was allowing her horse to walk in the shade by the roadside. The Absolute Fool dashed up to her, and, taking off his hat, asked her why she had left her city, where she was going, and what she intended to do when she got there.

The Princess looked at him in surprise. "I left my city because I wanted to," she said, "I am going about my business, and when I get to the proper place, I shall attend to it."

"Oh," said the Absolute Fool, "you refuse me your confidence, do you? But allow me to remark that I have a Gryphoness with me who is very frightful to look at, and whom it was my intention to keep in the bushes, but if you will not give fair answers to my questions, she must come out and talk to you, and that is all there is about it."

"If there is a Gryphoness in the bushes," said the Princess, "let her come out. No matter how frightful she is, I would rather she should come where I can see her than to have her hiding near me."

The Gryphoness, who had heard these words, now came out into the road. The horse of the Princess reared in affright, but his young rider patted him on the neck and quieted his fears.

"What do you and this young man want?" said the Princess to the Gryphoness, "and why do you question me?"

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“It is not of our own will that we do it,” said the Gryphoness, very respectfully. “But our master, the Inquisitive Dwarf, has sent us to obtain information about the points on which the young man questioned you, and until we have found out these things, it is impossible for us to return.”

“I am opposed to answering impertinent questions,” replied the Princess, “but in order to rid myself of you, I will tell you the reason of my journey.” She then briefly stated the facts of the case.

“Ah me!” said the Gryphoness. “I am very sorry, but you cannot tell us where you are going, and we cannot return until we know that. But you need not desire to be rid of us, for it may be that we can assist you in the object of your journey. This young man is sometimes very useful, and I shall be glad to do anything that I can to help you. If you should think that I would injure you, or willingly annoy you by my presence, it would grieve me to the heart.” And as she spoke, a tear bedimmed her eye.

The Princess was touched by the emotion of the Gryphoness.

“You may accompany me,” she said, “and I will trust you both. You must know this country better than I do. Have you any advice to give me in regard to my journey?”

“One thing I would strongly advise,” said the Gryphoness, “and that is that you do not travel any farther until we know in what direction it will be best to go. There is an inn close by, kept by a worthy woman. If you will stop there until to-morrow, this young man and I will scour the country round about, and try to find some news of your Prince.

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The young man will return and report to you to-morrow morning; and if you should need help or escort, he will aid and obey you as your servant. As for me, unless we have found the Prince, I shall continue searching for him. There is a prince in the city to the north of my master's tower, and it is not unlikely that it is he whom you seek."

"You can find out if it is he," answered the Princess, "by asking about the philopena."

"That will I do," said the Gryphoness, "and I will return hither as speedily as possible." Then, with respectful salutations, the Gryphoness and the Absolute Fool departed by different ways.

The Princess then repaired to the inn, where she took lodgings.

The next morning, the Absolute Fool came back to the inn, and, seeing the Princess, said: "I rode until after night-fall, searching for the Prince, before it occurred to me that, even if I should find him, I would not know him in the dark. As soon as I thought of that, I rode straight to the nearest house, and slept until daybreak, when I remembered that I was to report to you this morning. But as I have heard no news of the Prince, and as this is a beautiful, clear day, I think it would be extremely foolish to remain idly here, where there is nothing of interest going on, and when a single hour's delay may cause you to miss the object of your search. The Prince may be in one place this morning, and there is no knowing where he will be in the afternoon. While the Gryphoness is searching we should search also. We can return before sunset, and we will leave word here as to the direction

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we have taken, so that when she returns she can quickly overtake us. It is my opinion that not a moment should be lost. I will be your guide. I know this country well."

The Princess thought this sounded like good reasoning, and consented to set out. There were some beautiful mountains to the southeast, and among these, the Absolute Fool declared, a prince of good taste would be very apt to dwell. They, therefore, took this direction. But when they had travelled an hour or more, the mountains began to look bare and bleak, and the Absolute Fool declared that he did not believe any prince would live there. He therefore advised that they turn into a road that led to the northeast. It was a good road, and therefore he thought it led to a good place, where a person of good sense would be likely to reside. Along this road they therefore travelled. They had ridden but a few miles when they met three men, well armed and mounted. These men drew up their horses, and respectfully saluted the Princess.

"High-born lady," they said, "for by your aspect we know you to be such, we would inform you that we are the soldiers of the King, the outskirts of whose dominions you have reached. It is our duty to question all travellers, and, if their object in coming to our country is a good one, to give them whatever assistance and information they may require. Will you tell us why you are come?"

"Impertinent vassals!" cried the Absolute Fool, riding up in a great passion. "How dare you interfere with a princess who has left her city because it was so dull and stupid, and is endeavoring to find a prince with whom she has eaten a

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philopena, in order that she may marry him! Out of my way, or I will draw my sword and cleave you to the earth, and thus punish your unwarrantable curiosity!"

The soldiers could not repress a smile.

"In order to prevent mischief," they said to the Absolute Fool, "we shall be obliged to take you into custody."

This they immediately did, and then requested the Princess to accompany them to the palace of their king, where she would receive hospitality and aid.

The King welcomed the Princess with great cordiality. He had no son, and he much wished he had one, for in that case it might be his prince for whom the young lady was looking. But there was a prince, he said, who lived in a city to the north, who was probably the very man, and he would send and make inquiries. In the meantime the Princess would be entertained by himself and his queen, and if her servant would make a suitable apology his violent language would be pardoned. But the Absolute Fool positively refused to do this.

"I never apologize," he cried. "No man of spirit would do such a thing. What I say I stand by."

"Very well," said the King, "you shall fight a wild beast." Then he gave orders that the affair should be arranged for the following day.

In a short time, however, some of his officers came to him and told him that there were no wild beasts, those on hand having been kept so long that they had become tame.

"To be sure, there's the old lion Sardon," they said, "but he is so dreadfully cross, and has had so much experience in

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these fights, that for a long time it has not been considered fair to allow any one to enter the ring with him."

"It is a pity," said the King, "to make the young man fight a tame beast, but under the circumstances, the best thing to do will be to represent the case to him just as it is. Tell him we are sorry we have not an ordinary wild beast, but that he can take his choice between a tame one and the lion Sardon, whose disposition and experience you will explain to him."

When the matter was stated to the Absolute Fool, he refused with great scorn to fight a tame beast.

"I will not be degraded in the eyes of the public," he said. "I will take the old lion."

The next day the court and the public assembled to see the fight, but the Queen and our princess took a ride into the country, not wishing to witness a combat of this kind, especially one which was so unequal. The King ordered that every advantage should be given to the young man, in order that he might have every possible chance of success in fighting an animal which had been a victor on so many similar occasions. A large iron cage, furnished with a turnstile, into which the Absolute Fool could retire for rest and refreshment, but where the lion could not follow him, was placed in the middle of the arena, and the youth was supplied with all the weapons he desired. When everything was ready, the Absolute Fool took his stand in the centre of the arena, and the door of the lion's den was opened. The great beast came out; he looked about for an instant, and then, with majestic step, advanced toward the young man. When he was within a few paces of him, he crouched for a spring.

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The Absolute Fool had never seen so magnificent a creature, and he could not restrain his admiration. With folded arms and sparkling eyes, he gazed with delight upon the lion's massive head, his long and flowing mane, his magnificent muscles, and his powerful feet and legs. There was an air of grandeur and strength about him which completely enraptured the youth. Approaching the lion, he knelt before him, and gazed with wondering ecstasy into his great, glowing eyes. "What glorious orbs!" he inwardly exclaimed. "What unfathomable expression! What possibilities! What reminiscences! Everywhere, what majesty of curve!"

The lion was a good deal astonished at the conduct of the young man, and he soon began to suppose that this was not the person he was to fight, but probably a keeper, who was examining into his condition. After submitting to this scrutiny a few minutes he gave a mighty yawn, which startled the spectators, but which delighted the Absolute Fool, for never before had he beheld such a depth of potentiality. He knelt in silent delight at this exhibition of the beauty of strength.

Old Sardon soon became tired of all this, however, and he turned and walked back to his den. "When their man is ready," he thought to himself, "I will come out and fight him."

One tremendous shout now arose from the multitude.

"The youth has conquered!" they cried. "He has actually frightened the lion back into his den!" Rushing into the arena, they raised the Absolute Fool upon their shoulders and carried him in triumph to the open square in front of the palace, that he might be rewarded for his bravery. Here

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the King, followed by his court, quickly appeared, for he was as much delighted as any one at the victory of the young man.

“Noble youth,” he exclaimed, “you are the bravest of the brave. You are the only man I know who is worthy of our royal daughter, and you shall marry her forthwith. Long since I vowed that only with the bravest should she wed.”

At this moment the Queen and the Princess, returning from their ride, heard with joy the result of the combat, and riding up to the victor, the Queen declared that she would gladly join with her royal husband in giving their daughter to so brave a man.

The Absolute Fool stood for a moment in silent thought; then, addressing the King, he said:

“Was your Majesty’s father a king?”

“He was,” was the answer.

“Was his father of royal blood?”

“No, he was not,” replied the King. “My grandfather was a man of the people; but his preëminent virtue, his great ability as a statesman, and the dignity and nobility of his character made him the unanimous choice of the nation as its sovereign.”

“I am sorry to hear that,” said the Absolute Fool, “for it makes it necessary for me to decline the kind offer of your daughter in marriage. If I marry a princess at all, she must be one who can trace back her lineage through a long line of royal ancestors.” As he spoke his breast swelled with manly pride.

For a moment the King was dumb with rage. Then,

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loudly he shouted : “ Ho, guards ! Annihilate him ! Avenge this insult ! ”

At these words the sword of every bystander leaped from its scabbard. But before any one could take a step forward, the Princess seized the Absolute Fool by his long and flowing locks, and put spurs to her horse. The young man yelled with pain, and shouted to her to let go. But she held firmly to his hair, and as he was extraordinarily active and fleet of foot, he kept pace with the galloping horse. A great crowd of people started in pursuit, but as none of them were mounted, they were soon left behind.

“ Let go my hair ! Let go my hair ! ” shouted the Absolute Fool, as he bounded along. “ You don’t know how it hurts. Let go ! Let go ! ”

But the Princess never relinquished her hold until they were out of the King’s domain.

“ A little more,” cried the indignant youth, when she let him go, “ and you would have pulled out a handful of my hair.”

“ A little less,” said the Princess, contemptuously, “ and you would have been cut to pieces, for you have not sense enough to take care of yourself. I am sorry I listened to you, and left the inn to which the Gryphoness took me. It would have been far better to wait there for her, as she told me to do.”

“ Yes,” said the Absolute Fool, “ it would have been much better.”

“ Now,” said the Princess, “ we will go back there, and see if she has returned.”

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"If we can find it," said the other, "which I very much doubt."

There were several roads at this point, and, of course, they took the wrong one. As they went on, the Absolute Fool complained bitterly that he had left his horse behind him, and was obliged to walk. Sometimes he stopped, and said he would go back after it, but this the Princess sternly forbade.

When the Gryphoness reached the city of the Prince, it was night, but she was not sorry for this. She did not like to show herself much in the daytime, because so many people were frightened by her. After a good deal of trouble, she discovered that the Prince had certainly left the city, although his guardians did not seem to be aware of it. They were so busy with a new palace, in part of which they were living, that they could not be expected to keep a constant eye upon him. In the morning she met an old man who knew her and was not afraid of her, and who told her that the day before, when he was up the river, he had seen the Prince on his white horse, riding on the bank of the stream, and that near him, in the water, was something which now looked like a woman and again like a puff of mist. The Gryphoness reflected.

"If this Prince has gone off in that way," she said to herself, "I believe that he is the very one whom the Princess is looking for, and that he has set out in search of her; and that creature in the water must be our Water Sprite, whom our master has probably sent out to discover where the Prince is going. If he had told me about this, it would have saved

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much trouble. From the direction in which they were going, I feel sure that the Water Sprite was taking the Prince to the Land of the Lovely Lakes. She never fails to go there, if she can possibly get an excuse. I will follow them. I suppose the Princess will be tired waiting at the inn, but I must know where the Prince is, and whether or not he is really her Prince, before I go back to her."

The Gryphoness soon arrived at the Land of the Lovely Lakes, but although she wandered all that day and the next night, she saw nothing of those for whom she was looking.

The Princess and the Absolute Fool journeyed on until near the close of the afternoon, when the sky began to be overcast, and it looked like rain. They were then not far from a large piece of water, and at a little distance they saw a ship moored near the shore.

"I shall seek shelter on board that ship," said the Princess.

"It is going to storm," remarked the Absolute Fool. "I should prefer to be on dry land."

"As the land is not likely to be very dry when it rains," said the Princess, "I prefer a shelter, even if it is upon wet water."

"Women will always have their own way," muttered the Absolute Fool, folding his arms upon his chest and knitting his brows.

The ship belonged to a crew of Amazon sailors, who gave the Princess a hearty welcome.

"You may go on board if you choose," said the Absolute Fool to the Princess, "but I shall not risk my life in a ship manned by women."

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“It is well that you are of that opinion,” said the captain of the Amazons, who had overheard this remark, “for you would not be allowed to come on board, if you wished to. But we will give you a tent to protect you and the horse, in case it should rain, and will send you something to eat.”

While the Princess was taking tea with the Amazon captain, she told her about the Prince, and how she was trying to find him.

“Good!” cried the captain. “I will join in the search and take you in my ship. Some of my crew told me that yesterday they saw a young man, who looked like a prince, riding along the shore of a lake which adjoins the one we are on. In the morning we will sail after him. We shall keep near the shore, and your servant can mount your horse and ride along the edge of the lake. From what I know of the speed of this vessel, I think he can easily keep up with us.”

Early in the morning, the Amazon captain called her crew together. “Hurrah, my brave girls!” she said. “We have an object. I never sail without an object, and it delights me to get one. The purpose of our present cruise is to find the Prince of whom this Princess is in search, and we must spare no pains to bring him to her, dead or alive.”

Luckily for her peace of mind, the Princess did not hear this speech. The day was a fine one, and before long the sun became very hot. The ship was sailing quite near the land, when the Absolute Fool rode down to the water’s edge, and called out that he had something very important to communicate to the Princess. As he was not allowed to come on

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board, she was obliged to go on shore, to which she was rowed in a small boat.

“I have been thinking,” said the Absolute Fool, “that it is perfectly ridiculous, and very uncomfortable, to continue this search any longer. I would go back, but my master would not suffer me to return without knowing where you are going. I have, therefore, a plan to propose. Give up your useless search for this Prince, who is probably not nearly so handsome and intellectual as I am, and marry me. We will then return, and I will assume the reins of government in your domain.”

“Follow the vessel,” said the Princess, “as you have been doing, for I wish some one to take care of my horse.” Then without another word, she returned to the ship.

“I should like to sail as far as possible from shore during the rest of the trip,” said she to the captain.

“Put the helm bias!” shouted the Amazon captain to the steerswoman, “and keep him well out from land.”

When they had sailed through a small stream into the lake adjoining, the outlook, who was swinging in a hammock hung between the tops of the two masts, sang out, “Prince ahead!” Instantly all was activity on board the vessel. Story-books were tucked under coils of rope, hemstitching and embroidery were laid aside, and every woman was at her post.

“The Princess is taking a nap,” said the captain, “and we will not awaken her. It will be so nice to surprise her by bringing the Prince to her. We will run our vessel ashore, and then steal quietly upon him. But do not let him get away. Cut him down if he resists!”

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The Prince, who was plainly visible only a short distance ahead, was so pleasantly employed that he had not noticed the approach of the ship. He was sitting upon a low, moss-covered rock, close to the water's edge, and with a small hand-net, which he had found on the shore, he was scooping from the lake the most beautiful fishes, holding them up in the sunlight to admire their brilliant colors and graceful forms, and then returning them uninjured to the water. The Water Sprite was swimming near him, telling the fish to come up and be caught, for the gentle Prince would not hurt them. It was very delightful and rare sport, and it is not surprising that it entirely engrossed the attention of the Prince. The Amazons silently landed, and softly stole along the shore, a little back from the water. Then, at their captain's command they rushed upon the Prince.

It was just about this time that the Gryphoness, who had been searching for the Prince, caught her first sight of him. Perceiving that he was about to be attacked, she rushed to his aid. The Amazon sailors reached him before she did, and seizing upon him, they began to pull him away. The Prince resisted stoutly, but seeing that his assailants were women, he would not draw his sword. The Amazon captain and mate, who were armed with broad knives, now raised their weapons, and called upon the Prince to surrender or die. But at this moment the Gryphoness reached the spot, and catching the captain and mate each by an arm, she dragged them back from the Prince. The other Amazons, however, continued the combat, and the Prince defended himself by pushing them into the shallow water, where the Water Sprite nearly stifled them by

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throwing over them showers of spray. And now came riding up the Absolute Fool. Seeing a youth engaged in combat with the Amazon sailors, his blood boiled with indignation.

“A man fighting women!” he exclaimed. “What a coward! My arm shall ever assist the weaker sex.”

Jumping from the horse, he drew his sword, and rushed upon the Prince. The Gryphoness saw the danger of the latter, and she would have gone to his assistance, but she was afraid to loosen her hold of the Amazon captain and mate.

Spreading her wings, she flew to the top of a tree, where she deposited the two warlike women upon a lofty branch, from which she knew it would take them a long time to get down to the ground. When she descended she found that the Absolute Fool had reached the Prince. The latter, being a brave fellow, although of so gentle a disposition, had been glad to find a man among his assailants, and had drawn his sword to defend himself. The two had just begun to fight when the Gryphoness seized the Absolute Fool by the waist and hurled him backward into some bushes.

“You must not fight him!” she cried to the Prince. “He is beneath your rank! And as you will not draw your sword against these Amazons, you must fly from them. If you run fast they cannot overtake you.”

The Prince followed her advice, and, sheathing his sword, he rapidly ran along the bank, followed by some of the Amazons who had succeeded in getting the water out of their eyes and mouths.

“Run from women!” contemptuously remarked the Absolute Fool. “If you had not interfered with me,” he said to

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the Gryphoness, "I should soon have put an end to such a coward."

The Prince had nearly reached the place opposite to which the ship was moored, when the Princess, who had been awakened by the noise of the combat, appeared upon the deck of the vessel. The moment she saw the Prince, she felt convinced that he was certainly the one for whom she was looking. Fearing that the pursuing Amazons might kill him, she sprang from the vessel to his assistance. But her foot caught in a rope, and instead of reaching the shore, she fell into the water, which was here quite deep, and immediately sank out of sight. The Prince, who had noticed her just as she sprang, and who felt equally convinced that she was the one for whom he was searching, stopped his flight and rushed to the edge of the bank. Just as the Princess rose to the surface, he reached out his hand to her, and she took it.

"Philopena!" cried the Prince.

"You have won," said the Princess, gayly shaking the water from her curls, as he drew her ashore.

At the request of the Princess, the pursuing Amazons forbore to assail the Prince, and when the captain and the mate had descended from the tree, everything was explained.

Within an hour, the Prince and Princess, after taking kind leave of the Gryphoness and Water Sprite, and of the Amazon sailors, who cheered them loudly, rode away to the city of the Princess, while the three servants of the Inquisitive Dwarf returned to their master to report what had happened.

The Absolute Fool was in a very bad humor, for he was obliged to go back on foot, having left his horse in the kingdom

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where he had so narrowly escaped being killed. And, besides this, he had had his hair pulled, and had not been treated with proper respect by either the Princess or the Gryphoness. He felt himself deeply injured. When he reached home, he determined that he would not remain in a position where his great abilities were so little appreciated. "I will do something," he said, "which shall prove to the world that I deserve to stand among the truly great. I will reform my fellow-beings, and I will begin by reforming the Inquisitive Dwarf." Thereupon he went to his master and said :

"Sir, it is foolish and absurd for you to be meddling thus with the affairs of your neighbors. Give up your inquisitive habits, and learn some useful business. While you are doing this, I will consent to manage your affairs."

The Inquisitive Dwarf turned to him and said : "I have a great desire to know the exact appearance of the North Pole. Go and discover it for me."

The Absolute Fool departed on this mission, and has not yet returned.

When the Princess, with her Prince, reached her city, her uncles were very much amazed, for they had not known she had gone away. "If you are going to get married," they said, "we are very glad, for then you will not need our care, and we shall be free from the great responsibility which is bearing us down."

In a short time the wedding took place, and then the question arose in which city should the young couple dwell. The Princess decided it.

"In the winter," she said to the Prince, "we will live in

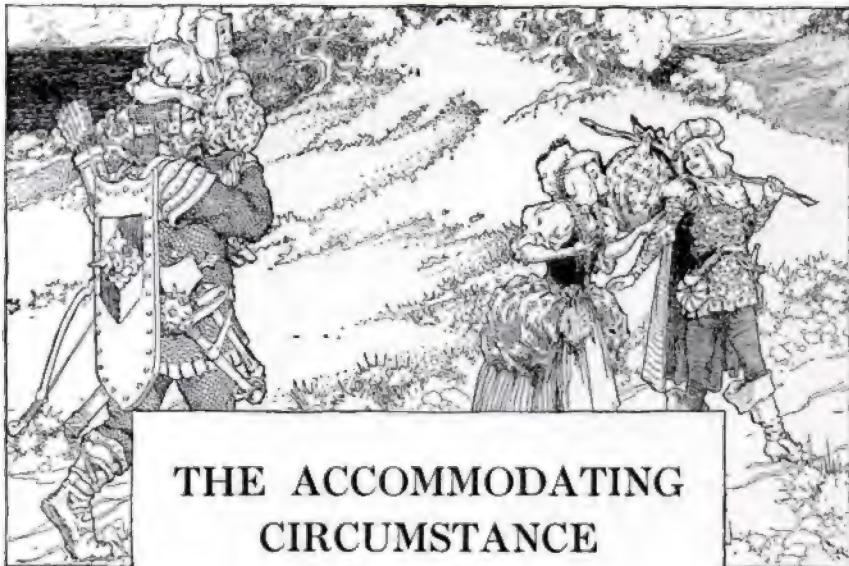
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your city, where all is life and activity, and where the houses are so well built, with all the latest improvements. In the summer we will come to my city, where everything is old, and shady, and serene." This they did, and were very happy.

The Gryphoness would have been glad to go and live with the Princess, for she had taken a great fancy to her; but she did not think it worth her while to ask permission to do this.

"My impulses, I know, are good," she said, "but my appearance is against me."

As for the Water Sprite, she was in a truly disconsolate mood, because she had left so soon the Land of the Lovely Lakes, where she had been so happy. The more she thought about it, the more she grieved, and one morning, unable to bear her sorrow longer, she sprang into the great jet of the fountain. High into the bright air the fountain threw her, scattering her into a thousand drops of glittering water, but not one drop fell back into the basin. The great, warm sun drew them up, and, in a little white cloud, they floated away across the bright blue sky.



THE ACCOMMODATING CIRCUMSTANCE

IT was on a bright afternoon, many, many years ago, that a young baron stood on the stone steps that led down from the door of his ancestral home. That great castle was closed and untenanted, and the baron was taking leave of it forever. His father, who was now dead, had been very unfortunate, and had been obliged to sell his castle and his lands. But he had made it a condition that the nobleman who bought the estate should allow the young baron to occupy it until he was twenty-one years of age.

This period had now arrived, and although the purchaser, who did not need the castle, had told the baron that he might remain there as long as he chose, the young man was too high-spirited to depend upon the charity of any one, and he determined to go forth and seek a fortune for himself. His purpose was to go to the town of the Prince of Zisk, a journey of a few days, and to offer to join an army which the Prince

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intended to lead against a formidable band of robbers which had set up a stronghold in his dominions. If he should distinguish himself in this army, the young baron hoped that he might rise to an honorable position. At any rate he would earn a livelihood for himself, and be dependent upon no one.

But it was a very sad thing for him to leave this home where he was born, and where he had spent most of his life. His parents were dead, he had no relatives, and now he was to leave the house which had been so dear to him. He stood with one foot upon the ground, and the other upon the bottom step, and looked up to the great hall door which he had shut and locked behind him, as if he were unwilling to make the movement which would finally separate him from the old place.

As he stood thus he heard some one approaching, and, turning, he saw an old woman and a young girl coming toward the castle. Each carried a small bundle, and, besides these, the young girl had a little leathern bag, which was fastened securely to her belt.

“Good sir,” said the old woman, “can you tell me if we can rest for the night in this castle? My granddaughter and I have walked since early morning, and I am very tired. It is a long time since we have passed a house, and I fear we might not come to another one to-day.”

The baron hesitated for a moment. It was true that there was no other house for several miles, and the old woman looked as if she was not able to walk any farther. The castle was shut up and deserted, for he had discharged his few servants that morning, and he was just about to leave it himself;

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but, for all that, he could not find it in his heart to say that there was no refuge there for these two weary travellers. His family had always been generous and hospitable, and although there was very little that he could offer now, he felt that he must do what he could, and not send away an old woman and a young girl to perish on the road in the cold winter night which was approaching.

“The castle is a bare and empty place,” he said, “but you can rest here for the night.” And so saying, he went up the steps, opened the door, and invited the travellers to enter.

Of course if they stayed there that night, he must do so also, for he could not leave the castle in the care of strangers, although these appeared to be very inoffensive people. And thus he very unexpectedly reentered the home he thought he had left forever.

There was some wood by the fireplace in the great hall, and the baron made a fire. He had left no provisions in the house, having given everything of the kind to the servants, but he had packed into his wallet a goodly store of bread, meat, and cheese, and with these he spread a meal for the wayfarers. When they had been strengthened by the food and warmed by the fire, the old woman told her story.

“You must not think, kind sir,” she said, “that we are poor outcasts and wanderers. I have a very pleasant little home of my own, where my granddaughter and myself have lived very happily ever since she was a little baby, and now, as you see, she is quite grown up. But Litza — that is her name — has a godmother who is a very peculiar person, whom we are all obliged to obey, and she came to us yesterday and

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gave Litza a little iron box, which is in that leathern bag she carries, and charged her to start with me the next morning, and take it to its destination."

In order to account for the condition of his house, the baron then told his story. Litza and her grandmother were grieved to hear the account of the young nobleman's ill fortune, and the old woman said if they prevented his journey they might yet try to go on.

"Oh, no," said the baron. "I was starting too late anyway, for it had taken me so long to bid good-by to my old home. It will be just as well for me to go to-morrow. So you and your granddaughter shall have a room here to-night, and all will be well."

The next morning, after a breakfast which quite finished the baron's provisions, the three set out together, as their roads lay in the same direction. About noon the old woman became very tired and hungry. There was no house in sight, and the road seemed quite deserted.

"If I had known it would be so far," she said to herself, "we would not have come. I am too old to walk for two days. If I could only remember the meaning of the words, I would surely try them now. But I cannot remember—I cannot remember."

When this old woman was a little girl, she had lived with Litza's godmother, who was the daughter of a magician, and was now over a hundred years old. From this person she had learned five magical words, which, when repeated, would each bring up a different kind of goblin or spirit. In her youth Litza's grandmother had never used these words, for she was a

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timid girl; and now for years, although she remembered the words, she had entirely forgotten what sort of creature each one would call forth. Some of these beings were good, and some she knew were very bad, and so, for fear of repeating the wrong word, she had never used any one of them. But now she felt that if ever she needed the help of goblin or fairy, she needed it this day.

“I can walk no farther,” she said, “and that young man cannot carry me. If I do not use my words, I must perish here. I will try one of them, come what may.” And so, with fear and trembling, she repeated aloud the third word.

Instantly there appeared before her a strange being. He was of a pale pea-green color, with great black eyes, and long arms and legs which seemed continually in motion. He jumped into the air, he snapped his fingers over his head, and suddenly taking from his pockets two empty bottles and an earthen jar, he began tossing them in the air, catching them dexterously as they fell.

“Who on earth are you?” said the old woman, much astonished.

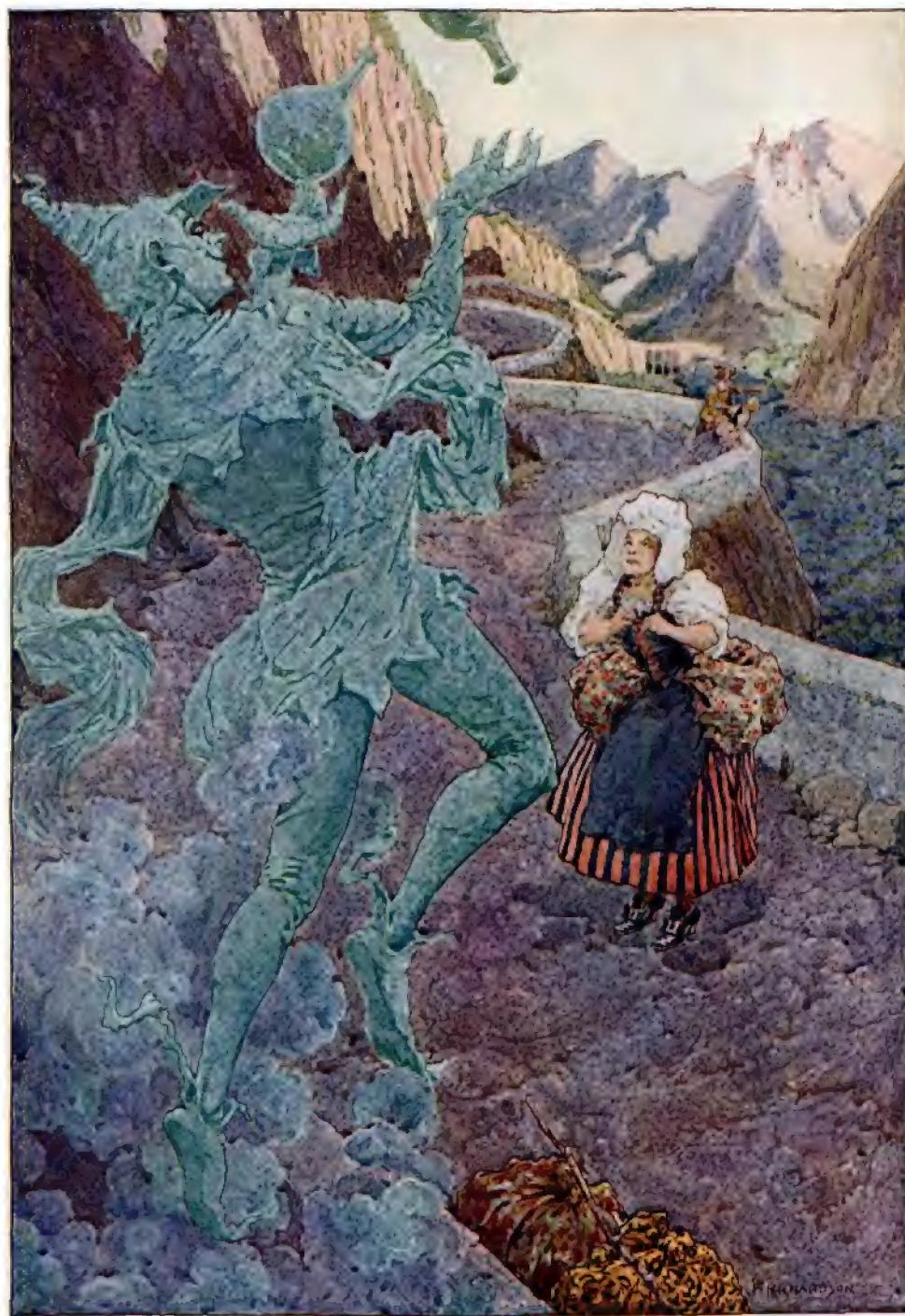
“I am the Green Goblin of the Third Word,” replied the other, still tossing up his jar and bottles; “but I am generally known as the Accommodating Circumstance.”

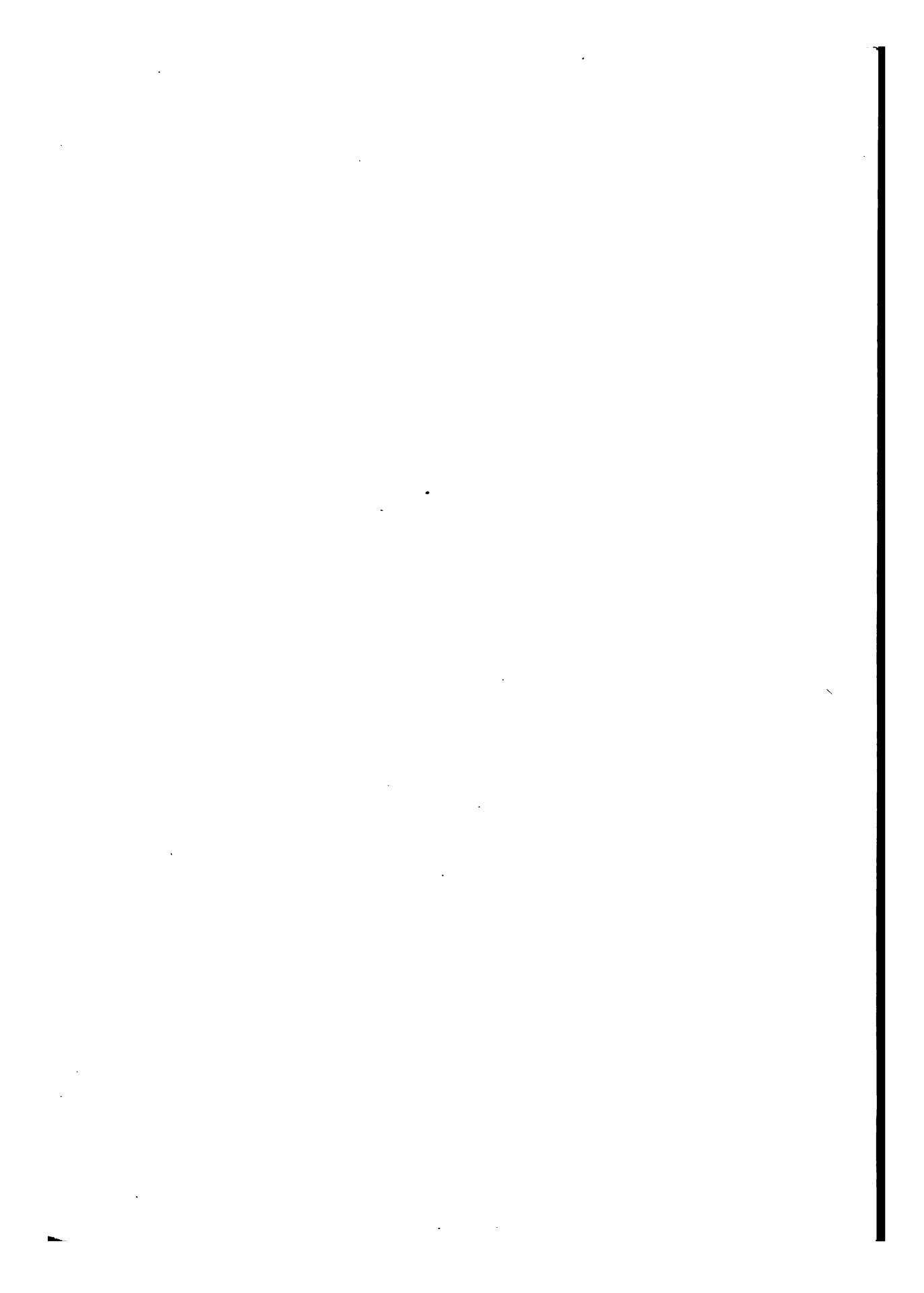
“I don’t know exactly what that may be,” said the old woman, “but I wish that instead of a juggler with empty bottles and jars, you were a pastry-cook with a basket full of something to eat.”

Instantly the goblin changed into a pastry-cook carrying a large basket filled with hot meat pies and buns. The old



“Who on earth are you?” said the old woman, much astonished.





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woman jumped to her feet with delight, and beckoned to the others, who had just turned round to see where she was.

“Come here!” she cried. “Here is a pastry-cook who has arrived just in the nick of time.”

The party now made a good meal, for which the old woman would not allow the baron to pay anything, as it was a repast to which she had invited him. And then they moved on again, the pastry-cook following. But although the grandmother was refreshed by the food, she was still very tired. She fell back a little and walked by the side of the pastry-cook.

“I wish,” she said, “that you were a man with a chair on your back. Then you might carry me.”

Instantly the pastry-cook changed into a stout man in a blue blouse, with a wooden armchair strapped to his back. He stooped down, and the old woman got into the chair. He then walked on, and soon overtook the baron and Litza.

“Ah!” cried the old woman, “see what good fortune has befallen me! The pastry-cook has gone, and this man with his chair has just arrived. Now I can travel with ease and comfort.”

“What wonderful good fortune!” cried Litza.

“Wonderful good fortune, indeed!” exclaimed the baron, equally pleased.

The four now pursued their way, the old woman comfortably nodding in the chair, to which the baron had secured her with his belt. In about an hour the road branched, and the baron asked the chairman which way led to the town of Zisk. But the man, who was a dull, heavy fellow, did not know, and the baron took the road to the right. After walking two or

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three miles they came to a wide river, at the edge of which the road stopped. On a post was a signboard on which was painted, "Blow ye horn for ye ferryman." Below this hung a large horn, with a small pair of bellows attached to the mouthpiece.

"That is a good idea," said the baron. "One ought to be able to blow a horn very well with a pair of bellows." And so saying, he seized the handle of the bellows and blew a blast upon the horn that made Litza and her grandmother clap their hands to their ears. "I think that will bring the ferryman," said the baron, as he helped the old woman to get out of her chair.

In a few minutes they heard the sound of oars, and a boat made its appearance from behind a point of land to the right. To their surprise it was rowed by a boy about fourteen years old. When the boat touched the shore they all got in.

"I am afraid you cannot row so heavy a load," said the baron to the boy; "but perhaps this good man will help you."

The boy, who was well dressed and of a grave demeanor, looked sternly at the baron. "Order must be kept in the boat," he said. "Sit down, all of you, and I will attend to the rowing." And he began to pull slowly but steadily from the shore. But instead of rowing directly across the river, he rounded the high point to the right, and then headed toward an island in the stream.

"Where are you taking us?" asked the baron.

"This is the place to land," replied the boy, gruffly. And in a few strokes he ran the boat ashore at the island.

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A large house stood not far away from the water, and the baron thought he would go there and make some inquiries, for he did not like the manner of the boy in the boat. He accordingly stepped ashore, and, followed by the rest of his party, approached the house. When they reached it they saw over the door, in large black letters, the words, "School for Men." Two boys, well dressed and sedate, came out to meet them, and ushered them in.

"What is this place?" asked the baron, looking about him.

"It is a school," was the reply, "established by boys for the proper instruction and education of men. We have found that there are no human beings who need to be taught so much as men; and it is to supply this long-felt want that we have set up our school. By diverting the ferry from its original course we have obtained a good many scholars who would not otherwise have entered."

"What do you teach men?" asked the baron.

"The principal thing we try to teach them," said the other, "is the proper treatment of boys. But you will know all about this in good time."

"What I wish most now to know," said the baron, smiling, "is whether or not we can all obtain lodgings here to-night. It is already growing dark."

"Did these two ladies come with you?" asked the boy.

"Yes," answered the baron.

"It was very good of them," said the boy. "Of course they can stay here all night. We always try to accommodate friends who come with scholars."

It was past supper time at the school, but the baron and

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his party were provided with a good meal, and Litza and her grandmother were shown to a guest chamber on the ground floor. One boy then took charge of the chair-carrier, while another conducted the baron to a small chamber upstairs, where he found everything very comfortable and convenient.

“ You can sit up and read for an hour or two,” said the boy. “ We don’t put our scholars all into one great room like a barrack, and make them put out their lights and go to bed just at the time when other people begin to enjoy the evening.”

When the baron arose the next morning he was informed that the principal wished to see him, and he was taken downstairs into a room where there was a very solemn-looking boy sitting in an armchair before a fire. This was the principal, and he arose and gravely shook hands with the baron.

“ I am glad to welcome you to our school,” he said, “ and I hope you will do honor to it.”

“ I have no intention of remaining here,” said the baron.

The principal regarded him with a look of great severity. “ Silence, sir ! ” he said. “ It pains me to think of the sorrow which would fill the hearts of your children or your young relatives if they could hear you deliberately declare that you did not wish to avail yourself of the extraordinary educational opportunities which are offered to you here.”

The principal then rang a bell, and two of the largest scholars, who acted as monitors, entered the room. “ Take this new pupil,” he said to them, “ to the schoolrooms, and have him entered in the lowest class. He has much to learn.”

The baron saw that it would be useless to resist these two

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tall fellows, who conducted him from the room, and he peacefully followed them to the large schoolroom, where he was put in a class and given a lesson to learn.

The subject of the lesson was the folly of supposing that boys ought not to be trusted with horses, battle-axes, and all the arms used in war and hunting. There were twelve reasons proving that men were very wrong in denying these privileges to boys, and the baron was obliged to learn them all by heart.

At the other end of the room he saw the chair-carrier, who was hard at work over a lesson on the wickedness of whipping boys. On the wall, at one end of the room, was the legend in large letters, "The Boy: Know Him, and You are Educated." At the other end were the words, "Respect your Youngers."

In the afternoon the baron studied sixteen rules which proved that boys ought to be consulted in regard to the schools they were sent to, the number of their holidays, the style of their new clothes, and many other things which concerned them more than any one else. At the end of the afternoon session the principal made a short address to the school, in which he said that in four days it would be Christmas, at which time the scholars would have a month's holiday.

"We believe," he said, "that scholars ought to have at least that much time at Christmas; and, besides, your instructors need relaxation. But," said he, with a severe look at the baron, "disaffected new-comers must not suppose that they will be allowed this privilege. Such pupils will remain here during the holidays."

After this speech school was dismissed, and the scholars were allowed three hours to play.

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The baron was disturbed when he found that he would not be permitted to leave. He had heard that the Prince of Zisk intended to start on his expedition immediately after Christmas; and if he did not get to the town very soon he could not join his army. So he determined to escape.

Walking about, he met Litza and her grandmother. The old woman was very much troubled. She had been told that she could leave whenever she chose, but she felt she could not go away without the chair-carrier, and he was detained as a pupil. She would not explain her trouble to her granddaughter, for she did not wish her to know anything about the magical nature of the assistance she had received. In a few moments the chair-carrier also made his appearance, and then the baron, seeing that none of the boys were in sight, proposed that they should go down to the beach and escape in a ferry-boat.

The boat was found there, with the oars, and they all jumped in. The baron and the chair-carrier then each seized an oar and pushed off. They were not a dozen yards from the shore when several of the boys, accompanied by some of the larger pupils, came running down to the beach. The baron could not help smiling when he saw them, and, resting on his oar, he made a little speech.

“My young friends,” he said, “you seem to have forgotten, when you set up your school, that men, when they become scholars, are as likely to play truant as if they were boys.”

To these remarks the boy teachers made no answer, but the big scholars on shore looked at each other and grinned. Then they all stooped down and took hold of a long chain

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that lay coiled in the shallow water. They began to pull, and the baron soon perceived that the other end of the chain was attached to the boat. He and the chair-man pulled as hard as they could at the oars, but in spite of their efforts they were steadily drawn to shore. Litza and her grandmother were then sent to their room, while the baron and the chair-man were put to bed without their suppers.

The next day the old grandmother walked about by herself, more troubled than ever, for she was very anxious that Litza should fulfil her mission, and that they should get back home before Christmas. And yet she would not go away and leave her magical companion. Just then she saw the chair-carrier looking out of a second-story window, with a blanket wrapped around him.

“Come down here,” she said.

“I can’t,” he answered. “They say I am to stay in bed all day, and they have taken away my clothes.”

“You might as well be back with your goblin companions,” said the old woman, “for all the use you are to me. I wish you were somebody who could set things straight here.”

Instantly there stood by her side a school trustee. He was a boy of grave and pompous demeanor, handsomely dressed, and carrying a large gold-headed cane.

“My good woman,” he said, in a stately voice, “is there anything I can do to serve you?”

“Yes, sir,” she replied. “My granddaughter and I,” pointing to Litza, who just then came up, “wish to leave this place as soon as possible, and to pursue our journey.”

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“Of course you may do so,” said he. “This is not a school for women.”

“But, grandma,” said Litza, “it would be a shame to go away without the poor baron, who is as anxious to get on as we are.”

“There is a gentleman here, sir,” said the old woman, “who does not wish to stay.”

“Did you bring him?” asked the trustee.

“Yes, sir; he came with us.”

“And you wish to take him away again?” said he.

“Yes, sir; we do,” said Litza.

“Very well, then,” said the trustee, severely, “he shall be dismissed. We will have no pupils here whose children or guardians desire their removal. I will give orders in regard to the matter.”

In a few moments the baron’s clothes were brought to him, and he was told that he might get out of bed and leave the establishment. When he came down and joined Litza and her grandmother, he looked about him and said: “Where is the chair-carrier? I cannot consent to go away and leave him here.”

“Do not trouble yourself about that man,” said the grandmother; “he has already taken himself away.”

The party accompanied by the trustee, proceeded to the boat, where the boy ferryman was waiting for them. To the surprise of the baron the trustee got in with them, and they were all rowed to the other side of the river, where they found the road that led to Zisk. The school trustee walked with them, delivering his opinions in regard to the education of men. The baron grew very tired of hearing this talk.

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“I am much obliged to this person,” he thought, “for having enabled me to get away from that queer school; but he certainly is a dreadful bore. I wish he were going on some other road.”

Litza and her grandmother agreed with the baron, and the old woman would gladly have changed the trustee into a chair-carrier again, but she had no opportunity of doing so, for the pompous little fellow never fell back behind the rest of the party, where he could be transformed unobserved. So they all walked on together until they reached the middle of a great plain, when suddenly a large body of horsemen appeared from behind a clump of trees at no great distance.

“It is a band of robbers!” said the baron, stopping, and drawing his sword. “I know their flag. And they are coming directly toward us.”

The grandmother and Litza were terribly frightened, and the baron turned very pale, for what could his one sword do against all those savage horsemen? As for the school trustee, he was glad to fall back now, and he crouched behind the baron, nearly scared out of his wits. He even pushed the old woman aside, so as to better conceal himself.

“You wretched coward!” she exclaimed. “I wish you were somebody able to defend us against these robbers.”

Instantly there was a great clank of steel, and in the place of the trustee there stood an immense man, fully eight feet high, clothed in mail, and armed to the teeth. At his left side he carried a great sword, and on the other a heavy mace. In his hand he held a strong bow, higher than himself, his

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belt was filled with daggers and arrows, and at his back was an immense shield.

“Hold this in front of your party,” he said to the baron, setting the shield down before him, “and I will attend to these rascals.”

Quickly fitting a long arrow to his bow, he sent it directly through the foremost horseman, and killed a man behind him. Arrow after arrow flew through the air, until half the robbers lay dead on the field. The rest turned to fly, but the armed giant sprang in among them, his sword in one hand and his mace in the other, and in less than five minutes he had slain every one of them.

“Now, then,” said he, returning, and taking up his bow and shield, “I think we may proceed without further fear.”

The baron and Litza were no less delighted at their deliverance than surprised at the appearance of this defender, and the old woman was obliged to explain the whole matter to them. “I did not want you to know anything about it,” she said to Litza, “for a young girl’s head should not be filled with notions of magic; but the case was very urgent, and I could not hesitate.”

“I am very glad you did not hesitate,” said the baron, “for in a few minutes we should all have been killed. There was certainly never anything so useful as your Accommodating Circumstance.”

The armed giant was a quiet and obliging fellow, and he offered to carry the old woman on his shoulder, which she found a very comfortable seat.

Toward evening they arrived in sight of the town of Zisk,

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and the baron said to the grandmother, "I am very much afraid you will lose your giant, for when the prince sees such a splendid soldier he will certainly enlist him into his army."

"Oh, dear!" cried the old woman, slipping down from the giant's shoulder. "I wish this great fellow was somebody who could not possibly be of any use to the prince as a soldier."

Instantly there toddled toward her a little baby about a year old. She had a white cap on her funny little head, and was very round and plump. She had scarcely taken three steps when she stumbled and sat down very suddenly, and then she began to try to pull off one of her little shoes. They all burst out laughing at this queer little creature, and Litza rushed toward the baby and snatched her up in her arms.

"You dear little thing!" she said, "the prince will never take you for a soldier."

"No," said the baron, laughing, "and she can never grow up into one."

It was too late for the baron to see the Prince of Zisk that day, and the party stopped for the night at a little inn in the town. The next morning, as the baron was about to go to the palace, he asked Litza what was her business in Zisk, and if he could help her.

"All my godmother told me to do," said the young girl, "was to give this box to the noblest man in Zisk, and of course he is the Prince."

"Yes," said the baron; "and as I am on my way to the palace, I may help you to see him."

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“Go you with the baron,” said the grandmother to Litza, “and I will stay here and take care of this baby. And as soon as you come back I will change her into a long-legged man with two chairs on his back, and we will get home to my cottage as fast as we can.”

When the baron and the young girl reached the palace they found the Prince in his audience-chamber, surrounded by officers and courtiers. Litza stood by the door, while the baron approached the Prince and respectfully told him why he had come.

“You are the very man we want!” cried the Prince. “I have conceived a most admirable plan of conquering my robber foes, and you shall carry it out. The day after to-morrow is Christmas, and these highwaymen always keep this festival as if they were decent people and good Christians. They gather together all their wives and children, and their old parents, and they sing carols and make merry all day long. At this time they never think of attacking anybody or of being attacked, and if we fall upon them then we can easily destroy them all, young and old, and thus be rid of the wretches forever. I have a strong body of soldiers ready to send, but they must be led by a man of rank, and all my officers of high degree wish to remain here with their families to celebrate Christmas. Now you are a stranger, and have nothing to keep you here, and you are the very man to lead my soldiers. Destroy that colony of robbers, and you shall have a good share of the booty that you find there.”

“Oh, Prince!” exclaimed the baron, “would you have

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me, on holy Christmas Day, when these families are assembled together to celebrate the blessed festival, rush upon them with an armed band, and slay them, old and young, woman and children, at the very foot of the Christmas tree? No man needs occupation more than I, but this is a thing I cannot do."

"Impudent upstart!" cried the Prince, in a rage, "if you cannot do this, there is nothing for you here. Begone!"

Without an answer the baron turned and left the hall. Litza, who still stood by the door, did not now approach the Prince, but ran after the baron, who was walking rapidly away. "This is yours," she said, taking the iron box from her little bag. "You are the noblest man."

The baron, surprised, objected to receiving the box, but Litza was firm. "I was told," she said, "to give it to the noblest man in Zisk, and I have done so."

When the baron found that he must keep the box he asked Litza what was in it.

"I do not know," said Litza; "but the key is fastened to the handle."

They sat down under a tree, in a quiet corner of the palace grounds, and opened the box. Something inside was covered with a piece of velvet, on top of which lay a golden locket. The baron opened it, and beheld a portrait of the beautiful Litza. "Why, you have given me yourself!" he cried, delighted.

"So it appears," said Litza, looking down upon the ground.

"And will you marry me?" he cried.

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to his violent remonstrances, and soon set him down in the courtyard of the inn.

“This is your doing,” he said to Litza. “I wished to show the prince that it was not fear that kept me from fighting the robbers, and you have prevented me.”

“You have proved that you are brave,” said Litza, “and that is enough. The prince is a bad man; let him fight his own robbers.”

The baron could not be angry at this proof of Litza’s prudent affection. And the next morning the party left the town on three horses, which the baron bought with one of his diamonds. The tall, fleet man who knew the country acted as guide, and led them by a by-road which did not pass near the School for Men. They arrived at the castle early on Christmas Eve, and the baron sent for his servants, his friends, and a priest, and he and Litza were married amid great rejoicing, for everybody was glad to see him come to his own again.

The next day Litza and the baron asked the grandmother to show them her magical servant in his original form. The old woman called the tall, fleet guide, and transformed him into the Green Goblin of the Third Word. This strange creature wildly danced and skipped before them, and, taking a watermelon and three pumpkins from his pocket, he tossed them up, keeping two of them always in the air.

The baron and his wife were very much amused by the antics of the goblin, and Litza exclaimed: “Oh, grandmother, if I were you I would keep him this way always. He would be wonderfully amusing, and I am sure he could carry you about, and scare away robbers, and do ever so many things.”

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“If you wish it,” said Litza. So that matter was settled.

The two then went to the inn, and told the grandmother what had occurred. She looked quite pleased when she heard this story, and then she asked what else was in the box.

“I found so much,” said the baron, “that I did not think of looking for anything more.” He then opened the box, and lifting the piece of velvet, found it filled with sparkling diamonds.

“That is Litza’s dowry,” cried the old woman. “It was a wise thing in her godmother to send her out to look for a noble husband, for one would never have come to my little cottage to look for her. But it seems to me that the box might as well have been given to you at your castle. It would have saved us a weary journey.”

“But if we had not taken that journey,” said Litza, “we should not have become so well acquainted, and I would not have known he was the noblest man.”

“It is all right,” said the grandmother, “and your dowry will enable the baron to buy his castle again, and to live there as his ancestors did before him.”

The grandmother desired to leave Zisk immediately, but the baron objected. “There is something I wish to do to-day,” he said; “and if we start early to-morrow morning on horseback we can reach my castle before dark.”

The old woman agreed to this, and the baron continued: “I would like you to lend me the baby for the rest of the day; and when the sun-dial in the courtyard shall mark three hours after noon you will please open this piece of paper and wish what I have written upon it.”

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The grandmother took the folded piece of paper, and let him have the baby. She and Litza wondered much what he was going to do, but they asked no questions.

The baron had learned that it was a three hours' walk from the town to the stronghold of the robbers, and just at noon he set out for that place, carrying the baby in his arms. Before he had gone a mile he wished that the baby had been changed into somebody who could walk, but it was too late now.

At three hours after noon the grandmother was about to open the paper, when Litza exclaimed, "Before you wish anything, dear grandmother, let me read what the baron has written."

Litza then took the paper and read it. "It is just what I expected," she cried. "He has gone out to fight the robbers, and he wants you to change the baby into that great armed giant to help him. But don't you do it, for the baron will certainly be killed, there are so many robbers in that place. Please change the baby into a very strong, fleet man who knows the country, and who will take the baron in his arms and bring him back here just as fast as he can."

"I will wish that," said the grandmother. And she did so.

The baron had just arrived in sight of the robbers' stronghold, when he was very much surprised to find that, instead of carrying a baby in his arms, he himself was in the grasp of a tall, powerful man, who was carrying him at the top of his speed toward the town. The baron kicked and struggled much worse than the baby had, but the man paid no attention

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to his violent remonstrances, and soon set him down in the courtyard of the inn.

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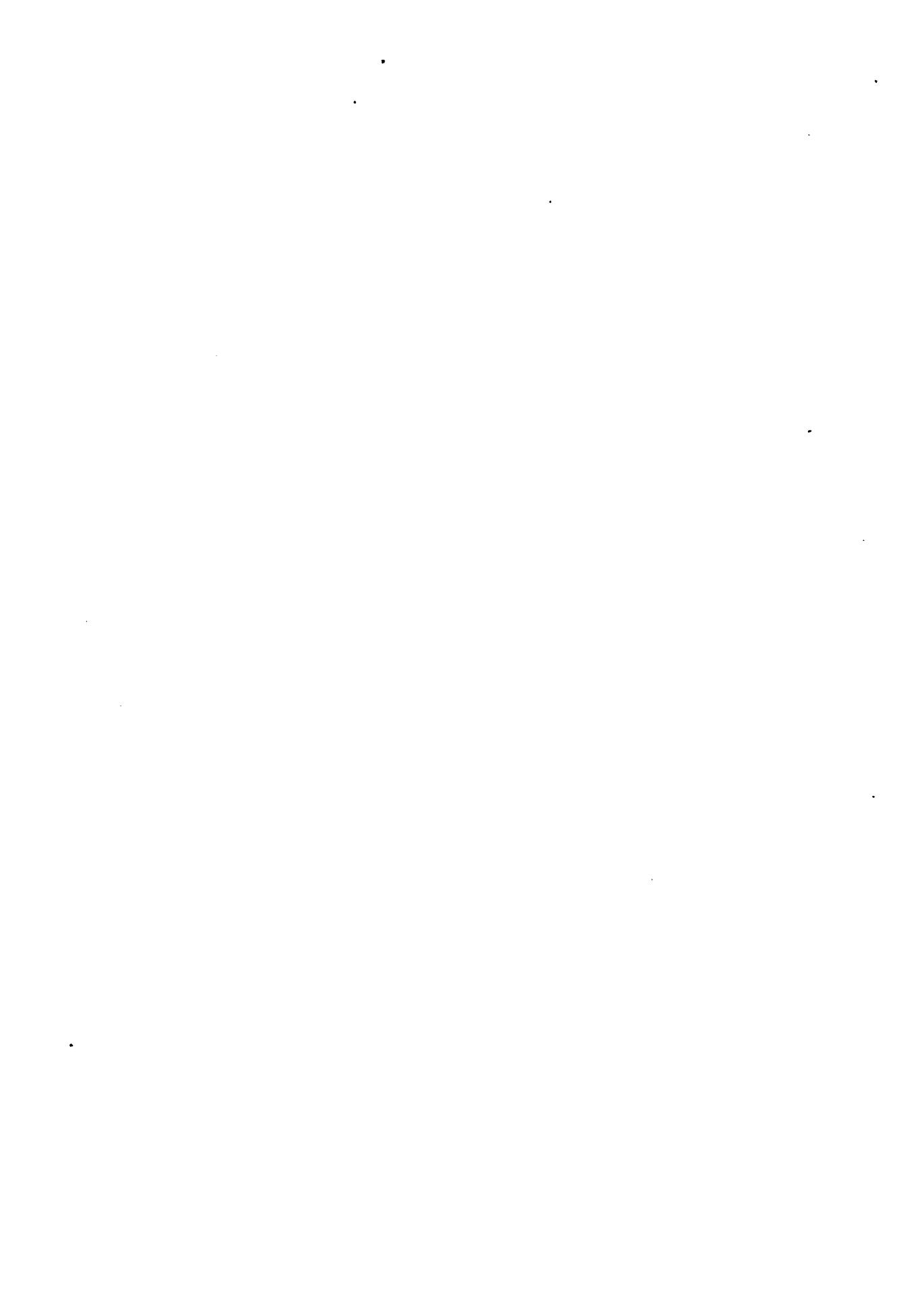
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“A merry green goblin might suit you,” said the old woman, shaking her head, “but it would not suit me. I want to return to my own little home, and what I now wish is a suitable companion.”

Instantly the goblin changed into a healthy middle-aged woman of agreeable manners, and willing to make herself useful. With this “suitable companion” the old grandmother returned, after the holidays, to her much-loved cottage, where she was often visited by the young baron and his wife; but, although they sometimes asked it, she never let them see the green goblin again.

“When a circumstance is just as accommodating as you want it to be,” she said, “the less you meddle with it the better.”

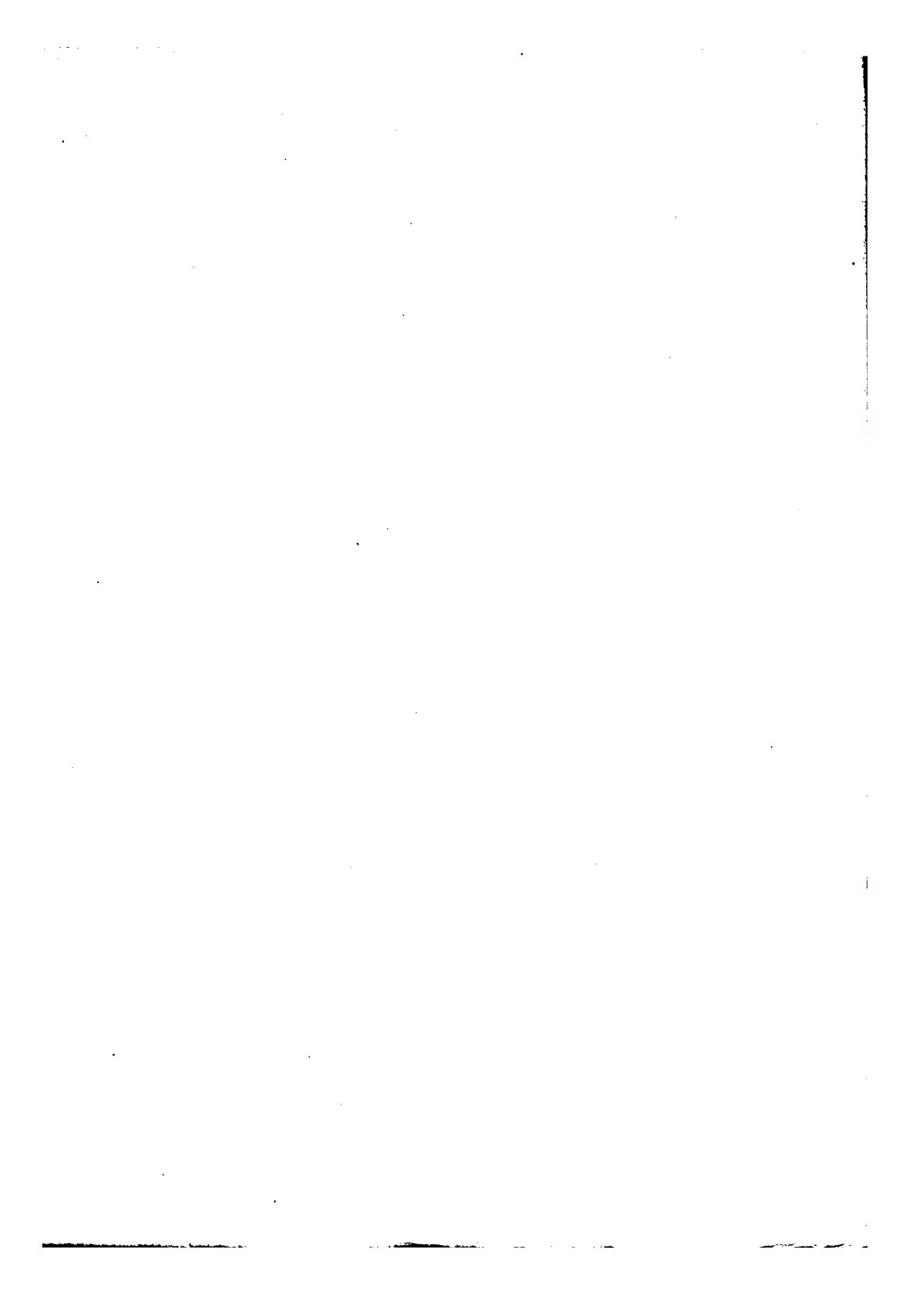




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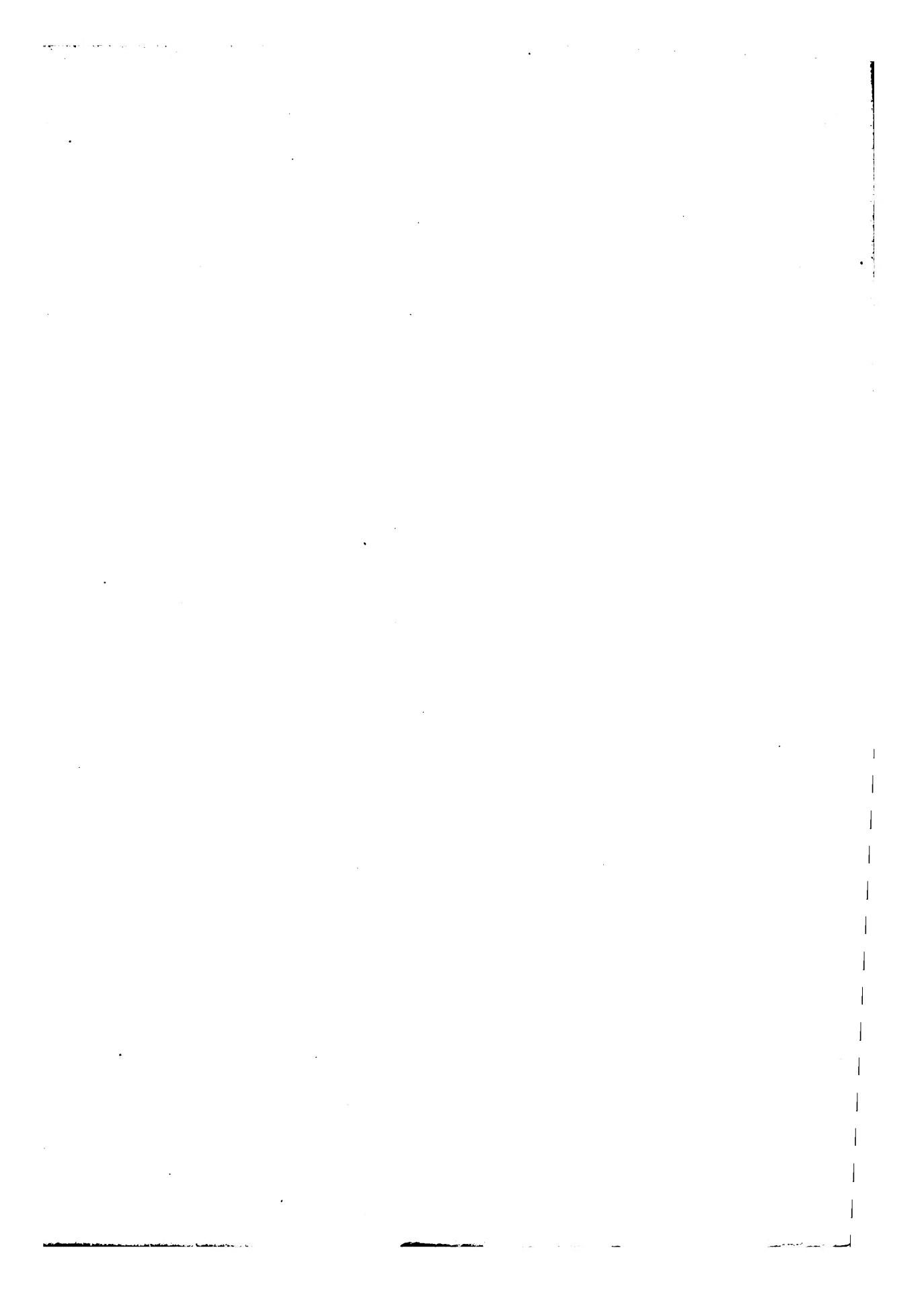
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